

**The London School of Economics and Political
Science**

**US Democracy Promotion in the
Middle East**

The Pursuit of Hegemony?

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Declaration

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Abstract

The promotion of ‘democracy’ abroad has been a feature of US foreign policy since the earlier part of the twentieth century, accompanying its rise as an international actor. It provided the ideological basis for its opposition to rivals in the form of imperialism, fascism and then communism. The end of the Cold War, which signalled the emergence of the US as the sole superpower, accelerated this process. With the ideological fusion of democracy and capitalism credited in large measure for the defeat of communism and the state-planned economy, the promotion of democracy alongside capitalism as the only viable, legitimate mode of governance emerged as an increasingly important component of US foreign policy. Countries as diverse as the Philippines, Chile and Poland have all been subject to US democracy promotion initiatives. In the Middle East though, the US traditionally engaged authoritarian governments as a means of ensuring its core interests in the region. However the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the G. W. Bush administration’s perception of the Middle East’s ‘democratic deficit’ as the underlying cause, initiated a significant departure in the traditional direction of US policy. Democracy promotion subsequently emerged as a central tenet of US policy to the Middle East.

This thesis argues that, as part of the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East, the US has sought to gradually replace proxy authoritarian governments with elite-based democracies. From a neo-Gramscian perspective, this strategic shift can be seen as a move from coercive to consensual forms of social control, the underlying aim being to ensure a more enduring form of stability in the states concerned. This is part of a long-term US strategy, evidenced prior in other regions such as Latin America, which ultimately aims at the achievement of a Gramscian hegemony; that is the internalisation by other societies of the US interpretation of ‘democracy’, and associated norms and values, as the natural order. Utilising an analytical framework derived from the neo-Gramscian approach, the thesis focuses in main on the Clinton (1993-2001) and G. W. Bush (2001-2008) administrations, and uses the following case studies – Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait – to examine the US strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East.

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Map of the Middle East



· 'Middle East Map', at http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/13/Middle_east.jpg, accessed 1/10/2012.

Introduction

Introduction

‘We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world... So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.’¹

– *President George W. Bush*

‘Ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere. Democracies don’t attack each other. They make better trading partners and partners in diplomacy.’²

– *President William J. Clinton*

‘Because they didn’t know better, they called it ‘civilization’, when it was part of their slavery.’³

– *Gaius Cornelius Tacitus*

Introduction

Most of the world’s great civilizations – whether the Babylonians, Greeks or Romans – have sought to spread their political systems and ideologies far beyond their borders. All were likely convinced of the self-evident and universal truth of their respective messages. The experience of the United States (US) on the international stage has been little different. Concomitant with its rise as a superpower, the US has sought to support the spread of its own worldview, an ideology comprised of a synthesis of liberal democratic political values and free market economic principles. The antecedents of this process can be traced as far back as the ‘civilizing’ of the Philippines at the end of the nineteenth century, when President William McKinley called on the US to ‘uplift and civilize and Christianize’ Filipino society.⁴ Over the

¹ Bush, G. W., ‘Inaugural Address’, 20/1/2005, at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4460172>, accessed 11/7/2012.

² Clinton, W. J., ‘State of the Union Address’, 25/1/1994, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/states/docs/sou94.htm>, accessed 14/7/2012.

³ Tacitus, G. C., *Agricola*, 98.

⁴ McKinley, W., ‘Remarks to Methodist Delegation’, 21/11/1899, cited in Schirmer, D., Shalom, S., (eds.), *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and*

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course of the coming twentieth century, the elemental features of the US's ideology were gradually honed and deployed in the defence of US interests abroad. One of the earliest instances was President Woodrow Wilson's invocation for the world to 'be made safe for democracy', on the eve of the US's entry into the First World War in 1917.⁵ The promotion of 'democracy' subsequently provided the ideological foundations for the US's opposition to adversaries in the form of imperialism, fascism and then communism.⁶ It has furthermore determined to a significant extent the contours of the contemporary international system, a reality reflected in the various democratic 'waves' that have occurred across the world over the past century.⁷ Azar Gat highlights the contribution made by the US:

If any factor gave the liberal democracies their edge, it was above all the existence of the United States rather than any inherent advantage. In fact, had it not been for the United States, liberal democracy may well have lost the great struggles of the twentieth century. This is a sobering thought that is often overlooked in studies of the spread of democracy in the twentieth century, and it makes the world today appear much more contingent and tenuous than linear theories of development suggest.⁸

A logical progression in US foreign policy can therefore be identified – as societies and their political systems have evolved, the US's focus has developed correspondingly from an early emphasis on 'civilising' to the contemporary 'democratising'. Following this line of thought, if civilising countries was posited as the 'white man's burden', most famously so by Rudyard Kipling, then democratising them may well be the 'Western man's burden'.⁹

Resistance, South End Press, 1987, p. 22. President McKinley portrayed the annexation of the Philippines as a 'benevolent assimilation'. He claimed that: 'we come, not as invaders or conquerors, but as friends, to protect the natives in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious rights.' See McKinley, W., 'Benevolent Assimilation Proclamation', 21/12/1898, at <http://filipino.biz.ph/history/benevolent.html>, accessed 5/1/2010.

⁵ Wilson, W., 'U.S. Declaration of War with Germany', 2/4/1917, at <http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/usawarddeclaration.htm>, accessed 3/10/2012.

⁶ Cox, M., Ikenberry, J., Inoguchi, T., (eds.), *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 10.

⁷ See Huntington, S., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993.

⁸ Gat, A., 'The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 4, 2007.

⁹ In response to the US's occupation of the Philippines in 1898, Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem in which he urged the 'white man' to take up the 'burden' of empire. See Kipling, R., 'The White Man's Burden', 1889.

Introduction

The Strategy of Democracy Promotion

Democracy promotion emerged as an organised, coherent US strategy in the early 1980s. It signalled a cautious but pivotal reassessment of the US's traditional posture abroad, which had long relied on authoritarian systems of government as the 'most expedient means of assuring stability and social control in the Third World.'¹⁰ Broadly speaking, the objectives of the strategy of democracy promotion have been twofold. First, the aim has been the maintenance of stability in the countries concerned, both of the state itself and wider society. Stability impacts the various political, economic, military and other interests identified by the US in each of these countries.¹¹ For instance, stability is a necessary requirement for the success of free market economies, a primary US concern. As part of this strategy, the US has sought to gradually replace proxy authoritarian governments with elite-based democracies.¹² Whereas authoritarian governments are reliant on coercion to rule, elite-based democracies incorporate more consensual means of governance. This means that latter are more likely to engender popular support, and consequently ensure a more enduring form of stability. As such the strategy of democracy promotion marks the development of a more subtle, nuanced means of pursuing stability abroad.

Second, the aim has been the achievement of hegemony in the Gramscian sense. This occurs when the ideology promoted, in this case liberal democratic norms as part of a broader Western political, economic, social and cultural impetus, is accepted as 'natural' by society at large, upon whose consent a consensual hegemony is dependent. The locus of hegemony is situated in civil society according to Gramscian theory. By integrating democracy promotion with a range of economic, social and cultural policies, the US has sought to strategically 'penetrate not just the state, but

¹⁰ Robinson, W., *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 15.

¹¹ The importance of stability to US interests is evidenced by the emphasis placed on failed states by the G. W. Bush administration, as for example Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan. President G. W. Bush stated that: 'America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.' See National Security Council (NSC), *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (September) 2002, p. 1.

¹² An elite-based democracy refers to 'a system in which a small group actually rules and mass participation in decision-making is confined to leadership choice in elections carefully managed by competing elites.' See Robinson, W., 'Globalization, the World System, and "Democracy Promotion" in U.S. Foreign Policy', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 5, (October) 1996, pp. 623-4.

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civil society... and *from therein* exercise control.’¹³ Civil society has subsequently proved to be the main focus of US democracy promotion programmes across the world. This reflects a gradual shift in the strategic emphasis of the US, from predominantly engaging state governments, in an effort to institute reforms top-down, to increasingly incorporating actors located in civil society, thus tentatively encouraging reform from within, rather than solely from above.

President Ronald Reagan (Republican, 1981–1989) was the first to truly position the ideology of ‘democracy’ as a guiding principle of US foreign policy, in the belief that ‘freedom’ could defeat the ‘evil empire’ of the Soviet Union.¹⁴ The Reagan administration subsequently formulated the strategy of democracy promotion, establishing much of the ‘infrastructure of democracy’, as for example the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and implementing reform initiatives in countries as diverse as the Philippines, Chile and Poland.¹⁵ This was based ultimately on a recognition that the maintenance of the status quo, namely the support of coercive authoritarian governments, was unsustainable in the long-term. As Carl Gershman, president of the NED, stated in 1986: ‘In a world of advanced communication and exploding knowledge, it is no longer possible to rely solely on force to promote stability and defend the national security. Persuasion is increasingly important, and the United States must enhance its capacity to persuade by developing techniques for reaching people at many different levels.’¹⁶ Gershman advocated the utility of democracy promotion for the US, so as to ‘enhance its capacity to persuade.’¹⁷ The strategy of democracy promotion was continued by George H. W. Bush (Republican, 1989–1993) in Nicaragua and Panama, but given that his presidency came at a time of monumental transition amidst the collapse of the Soviet Union, he accordingly

¹³ Robinson, ‘Globalization, the World System, and “Democracy Promotion” in U.S. Foreign Policy’, p. 643. William Robinson argues that: ‘The purpose of “democracy promotion” is not to suppress but to penetrate and conquer civil society in intervened countries, that is, the complex of “private” organizations such as political parties, trade unions, the media, and so forth, and *from therein*, integrate subordinate classes and national groups into a hegemonic...social order.’ See Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 29.

¹⁴ Reagan, R., ‘Address to Members of the British Parliament’, 8/6/1982, at <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/60882a.htm>, accessed 15/8/2012.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Gershman, C., ‘Fostering Democracy Abroad: The Role of the National Endowment for Democracy’, American Political Science Foundation Convention, 29/8/1986, cited in Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

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adopted a more pragmatic stance than the ideologically driven Reagan. But the template had already been set. As William Robinson observes:

Between 1984 and 1992, the NED and other branches of the US state mounted “democracy promotion” programs in 109 countries around the world, including 30 countries in Africa, 24 countries in Asia, 21 countries in Central and Eastern Europe (including the republics of the former Soviet Union), 8 countries in the Middle East, and 26 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁸

When President Bill Clinton (Democrat, 1993–2001) assumed power, he articulated his vision for the post-Cold War unipolar international system in terms of ‘democratic enlargement’.¹⁹ The Clinton administration coined the term ‘market democracy’, emphasising the intrinsic relationship perceived between free markets and democratic government, with the latter contingent on the former. This established the broad parameters of the post-1991 ideational context of US foreign policy, now amidst the absence of any valid competing ideology. Under George W. Bush (Republican, 2001–2009), in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, democracy promotion became one of the most prominent features of US foreign policy.²⁰ The G. W. Bush administration took the advocacy of political reform to unprecedented heights, situating it in the only region so far immune to the previous ‘waves’ of democracy, the Middle East.

¹⁸ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 332.

¹⁹ See Brinkley, D., ‘Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine’, *Foreign Policy*, No. 106, (Spring) 1997.

²⁰ This was clearly reflected in the levels of funding provided for democracy promotion programmes worldwide, which increased under the G. W. Bush administration from around \$500 million annually in 2000, to around \$1 billion in 2004. In 2005 the amount was \$2 billion, although it included spending in Afghanistan and Iraq. See Melia, T., *The Democracy Bureaucracy: The Infrastructure of American Democracy Promotion*, Princeton Project on National Security, (September) 2005, pp. 13-14.

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US Policy in the Middle East: From Authoritarianism to Democracy

From the origins of the term itself to the borders of the states it encompasses, the modern Middle East has been shaped considerably by its interactions with the West. Since the early twentieth century in particular, powers such as Britain, France and the US have sought to directly influence the politics of the region, and of the states within it. With the end of the Second World War, the US came to regard the Middle East as a vital sphere of interest, motivated initially by the presence of oil, and later further by a key ally in Israel. It consolidated its position as the predominant external power in the region in the aftermath of the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956. Since then, the Middle East has been perhaps the only region with a comparable degree of penetration by the US to that of Latin America, the proverbial American ‘backyard’, and one that served as an early milieu for the strategy of democracy promotion. Latin America provides the present study with a measure of comparison, situating US democracy promotion in the Middle East within a broader context, which is crucial given that the strategy is still in its early stages there. As was the case in Latin America over previous decades, authoritarian governments were long seen by the US as the most effective guarantors of stability in the Middle East. For instance Graham Fuller, a former Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council, argued that: ‘democratization “is not on the American agenda” in the Middle East... [because] Washington finds it more efficient to support a range of dictators across the Arab world as long as they conform to U.S. foreign policy needs.’²¹ Clearly the US has maintained strong, intimate relationships with authoritarian governments throughout its presence in the Middle East, an involvement which continued under the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations. But it is a common fallacy that holds that the US has had little interest in promoting democracy in the contemporary Middle East.

Time and again, particularly in the face of popular opposition and the prospect of instability, the US has abandoned authoritarian allies in favour of transitions to elite-based democracy – the Philippines, Chile and Panama are all cases in point. The US’s willingness to encourage such transitions is largely dependent on the *viability* of domestic political conditions, primarily the prospect of actors amenable to the US

²¹ Fuller, G., ‘Muslims Abhor the Double Standard’, *Los Angeles Times*, 5/10/2001, at <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/oct/05/local/me-53771>, accessed 16/7/2012.

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and its interests securing power through the ballot box.²² This study attempts to trace the efforts made by the US to secure such conditions in the Middle East, through the strategy of democracy promotion. Since the Clinton administration, the US's approach in the Middle East has been increasingly based on the premise that democratisation, accompanied by free market reforms, will usher in a new era of political, economic and social stability. Under Clinton, this was manifested in an emphasis on promoting economic initiatives in the region, alongside the growth of civil society, in the belief that this would facilitate eventual political reform. Under G. W. Bush, the events of September 11 precipitated a more aggressive military stance in the region, but one that nonetheless drew heavily on the very same premises of political and economic reform. This reflects a fundamental continuity in the US strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East, across both the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations, with its genesis found in the systematic advocacy of 'democracy' abroad by the Reagan administration.²³ Yet G. W. Bush did establish a significant precedent in US policy to the region, with his explicit rejection of the prevailing notion of Middle Eastern exceptionalism, namely the assumption 'that whole cultures and great religions are incompatible with liberty and self-government.'²⁴ In a landmark speech at the NED, G. W. Bush claimed that:

Our commitment to democracy is also tested in the Middle East, which is my focus today, and must be a focus of American policy for decades to come. In many nations of the Middle East – countries of great strategic importance – democracy has not yet taken root. And the questions arise: Are the peoples of the

²² The US has generally supported authoritarian arrangements until the conditions for elite-based democratic rule are present. Robinson argues: 'This makes perfect sense, once it is understood that the US objective is to... oppose authoritarianism only when doing so does not unacceptably jeopardize elite rule itself.' See Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 113.

²³ Howard Wiarda argues that: 'A US stance in favor of democracy helps get the Congress, the bureaucracy, the media, the public, and elite opinion to back US policy. It helps ameliorate the domestic debate, disarms critics (who could be against democracy?), provides a basis for reconciliation between "realists" and "idealists"... The democracy agenda enables us... [to] bridge the gap between our fundamental geopolitical and strategic interests... and our need to clothe those security concerns in moralistic language... The democracy agenda, in short, is a kind of legitimacy cover for our more basic strategic objectives.' See Wiarda, H., *The Democratic Revolution in Latin America: History, Politics, and U.S. Policy*, Holmes and Meier, 1990, p. 270. This indicates the broad appeal democracy promotion holds as a foreign policy, across the American political spectrum and amongst the population at large, which explains to a large extent the underlying presence of the policy in consecutive administrations over the years.

²⁴ Bush, G. W., 'State of the Union Address', 20/1/2004, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/transcripts/bushtext_012004.html, accessed 18/8/2012.

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Middle East somehow beyond the reach of liberty? Are millions of men and women and children condemned by history or culture to live in despotism? Are they alone never to know freedom, and never even to have a choice in the matter?²⁵

This was accompanied by the urgent, unequivocal recognition that, in the aftermath of September 11, authoritarianism systems of government could no longer best ensure US interests in the Middle East over the long-term. G. W. Bush stated:

Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe – because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export.²⁶

²⁵ Bush, G. W., 'Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy', 6/11/2003, at <http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary>, accessed 17/12/2012.

²⁶ Ibid.

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The Case Studies: Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait

The Middle East serves as a particularly interesting study of the US strategy of democracy promotion. It is one of the few remaining regions to remain relatively impervious to the processes of democratization that have characterised the rest of the world.²⁷ Yet it is of crucial geo-strategic importance to the US and the West more generally, which is reflected in the region's high levels of external penetration. Regional stability therefore remains a paramount US interest. The Middle East illustrates the fundamental tension posed between the US's ongoing relationships with authoritarian governments in the region, in the hope of maintaining the status quo and in particular stability over the short-term, and its desire to encourage political reform and the spread of its ideology, so as to ensure a more sound, enduring form of stability. Yet Middle Eastern governments have largely sought to resist the liberal democratic political and free market economic reforms advocated by the US, while Middle Eastern societies have, to varying degrees and by no means exclusively, shied away from the social and cultural values that are part of the promoted American ideology.²⁸ At the same time the Middle East serves as the host of one of the few viable counter-hegemonic ideologies in the form of Islamism, which has been gathering political momentum across the region over the last decade and more, with Islamist parties winning elections in Algeria, the Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and Egypt.²⁹ All these elements combine to form a fascinating region within which to situate a substantive study of the US strategy of democracy promotion. The individual case studies selected – Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait – represent a broad cross-section of the Middle East. Drawn from North Africa, the centre of the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf, they illustrate the diversity of the region – in political, economic, geographical, social and cultural terms. This allows the examination of US democracy promotion, and consequently the pursuit of hegemony, in very different contexts.³⁰ It allows a comparative assessment of the

²⁷ There are signs that this may be beginning to change. In the 'Arab Spring' of 2011, authoritarian governments were overthrown in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt as a result of popular discontent.

²⁸ At the same time elements of American popular culture have widespread appeal across the region, particularly amongst the young, urban populations.

²⁹ See Lynch, M., (ed.), *Islamists in a Changing Middle East*, Foreign Policy Magazine, 2012.

³⁰ For example, Egypt under Hosni Mubarak was classed as a 'partial' autocracy, which was gradually liberalising its economy. Iraq under Saddam Hussein was a 'total' dictatorship, whose economy was based on oil revenues. Kuwait under the Al-Sabah monarchy has long incorporated elements of consensual rule, while oil exports have been the main source of its income. See Brumberg, D., 'The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy', *Journal of Democracy*, (October) 2002. The US's relationship with

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strategy of democracy promotion in each of these countries, as well as the extrapolation of the particular findings onto the broader regional level. This in turn allows comparisons to be made with other countries and regions in which US democracy promotion has featured, and therefore an assessment of the extent to which the strategy of democracy promotion has been adapted to meet the specific requirements of the individual case studies, as well as that of the Middle East.

Egypt has been one of the main US allies in the region since the late 1970s. An integral regional actor, it has long facilitated US interests. Under Clinton, economic reform and the strengthening of civil society formed the basis of the administration's approach to democracy promotion. These were also the emphases of the G. W. Bush administration, which early on sought to position Egypt as potential leader of regional political reform. As a case study Egypt offers the opportunity to examine the strategy of democracy promotion in terms of a close authoritarian ally, and as such it exemplifies many of the challenges posed to US efforts to foster political reform in the Middle East. One of these was the presence of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood as the most likely alternative to the ruling National Democratic Party. Egypt illustrates the range of political, diplomatic, military, economic and social policies employed by the US in its attempt to gradually, but steadily facilitate 'a stable, democratic and legitimate transition to the post- [Hosni] Mubarak era.'³¹ In contrast US democracy promotion in Iraq came at a time of enmity between the two states. Although Clinton did make some limited efforts to facilitate regime change, democracy promotion only truly came to the fore under the G. W. Bush administration, which invaded and occupied the country, and then attempted to position it as a democratic exemplar, in the hope that this would lead to a regional 'domino effect' of democratisation. Iraq serves as one of the most prominent and extreme examples of US democracy promotion, in the largest American foreign intervention since Vietnam. The US's attempts to directly transplant its own political and economic institutions overnight in Iraq, as opposed to its efforts to gradually

each varied during the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations, from a close partnership with Egypt, to hostile relations with Iraq, to a strategic alliance with Kuwait. These factors impacted on the scope, depth and intensity of the US's implementation of the strategy of democracy promotion in each country.

³¹ Jones, S., 'Egypt: Updated Democracy Strategy', US Embassy in Egypt, 9/10/2007, at <http://www.aftenposten.no/spesial/wikileaksdokumenter/article4008796.ece#>. T0ALVIGzfap, accessed 24/8/2012.

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foster the growth of the underlying ideological norms and values elsewhere, offer a different perspective of the strategy of democracy promotion. Kuwait developed a close relationship with the US after it liberated it from Iraq in 1991. With its liberation partly contingent on political reform, Kuwait offers the opportunity to examine the trends of US democracy promotion since 1991, establishing a deeper historical background for the study. But despite providing critical support for Kuwaiti political reform during the 1990s, when it largely sustained authoritarianism in the rest of the Middle East, Kuwait was for the most part ignored when democracy promotion was made the defining element of G. W. Bush's regional policy in the aftermath of September 11. Kuwait offers a unique setting for the examination of the strategy of democracy promotion, one which incorporated significant existing elements of consensual governance, as well as widespread popular demands for reform.

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Situating the Research in the Literature

The present study argues that the US's promotion of democracy in the Middle East, under the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations, has constituted a strategic pursuit of hegemony in the Gramscian sense. That is, that the US has sought to encourage the internalisation of its liberal democratic ideology as the natural order by societies across the Middle East. It is important to emphasise here that this understanding of hegemony differs fundamentally from realist conceptions, which broadly see it as the leadership or dominance of one state over others. The hypothesis outlined above is explored in this study in two main ways. First by formulating an analytical framework derived from the Gramscian theoretical approach, which offers a critical perspective that transcends traditional IR theory. Second by applying this analytical framework to the US's strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East, and specifically the case studies of Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait. Utilising this novel theoretical framework to examine an empirically rich, diverse range of case studies, the study offers an original analysis of US foreign policy in the Middle East. Accordingly it makes a number of important contributions to the existing literature.

As a study of US foreign policy in the Middle East, this work is situated at the nexus of a range of literatures. These address US foreign policy, the Middle East region and its politics, the countries of Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait respectively, not to mention democracy itself, both in theoretical terms as well as the processes of its implementation. While the study draws upon these various, often overlapping literatures, and thus builds on the existing scholarship, it also diverges in a number of important ways. First and foremost, the majority of the literature has accepted democracy and by association its promotion, as intrinsically 'positive'.³² Such examples abound, ranging from Samuel Huntington to Francis Fukuyama to Thomas Carothers.³³ As Kim Hutchings suggests: 'it has become axiomatic to identify democracy, both as a positive and progressive feature.'³⁴ In this dominant

³² See for instance McFaul, M., 'Democracy Promotion as a World Value', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1, (Winter) 2004-5.

³³ Huntington, S., *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1993; Fukuyama, F., *The End of History and the Last Man*, Simon and Schuster, 1992; Carothers, T., *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004.

³⁴ Hutchings, K., 'Modelling Democracy', in Smith, H., (ed.), *Democracy and International Relations: Critical Theories/ Problematic Practices*, MacMillan Press, 2000, p. 39.

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conception, ‘democracy’ is reduced to an *institutional* definition that emphasises periodic elections, an independent civil society, freedom of the press and so forth.³⁵ It is further linked on a structural level with free market capitalism, which is posited as a prerequisite for the development of liberal democracy.³⁶ The varied history of democracy in the West is ultimately reinterpreted as one of linear progress, with the Western liberal democratic model as its teleological conclusion.³⁷ In short, the concept of ‘democracy’ itself is largely excused from critical interrogation, with the question becoming one of ‘how’ to best promote democracy rather than ‘why’ or even ‘whether’.³⁸ Relatively few scholars have diverged from this intellectual template. One of these was Robert Dahl, who distinguished ‘between democracy as an ideal system and the institutional arrangements that have come to be regarded as a kind of imperfect approximation of an ideal.’³⁹ Another was William Robinson, who examined US democracy promotion in the context of the Philippines, Chile, Nicaragua and Haiti.⁴⁰ While the present study draws more on this particular work than any other, it also differs from it in important ways, not least in terms of Robinson’s attribution of US democracy promotion to a global transnational elite, which erroneously diminishes the impact of national interests. The latter are particularly important in explaining the US’s entrenched presence in the Middle East, and subsequently its policies in the region.

Second, the literature has largely failed to situate liberal democracy as an ideology particular to the West, and not ‘universal’ as often is inherently assumed. For example, Amartya Sen argues that democracy is a universal value, based amongst others on the claim that a ‘universal value is [one] that people anywhere may have

³⁵ Carothers, T., *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999; Melia, T., *The Democracy Bureaucracy: The Infrastructure of American Democracy Promotion*, Princeton Project on National Security, (September) 2005.

³⁶ Rostow, W., *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, 1971; Lipset, S., *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, Second Edition, Heinemann, 1983; Huntington, S., ‘The Modest Meaning of Democracy’, in Pastor, R., (ed.) *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum*, Holmes & Meier, 1989.

³⁷ Christopher Hobson offers a valuable deconstruction of the history of ‘democracy’. See Hobson, C., ‘Beyond the End of History: The Need for a “Radical Historicisation” of Democracy in IR’, *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 37, 2009.

³⁸ Milja Kurki highlights the contested nature of democracy and the potential impact on its promotion. See Kurki, M., ‘Democracy and Conceptual Contestability: Reconsidering Conceptions of Democracy in Democracy Promotion’, *International Studies Review*, Vol. 12, Issue 3, (September) 2010.

³⁹ Dahl, R., *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Yale University Press, 1971, p. 9.

⁴⁰ Robinson, W., *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

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reason to see it as valuable.⁴¹ This approach was exemplified by Fukuyama's contentious reference to 'the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.'⁴² The abstraction of 'democracy' and its re-interpretation in universalist terms, is of particular relevance to the study of US democracy promotion in the Middle East, given the vastly different political, economic, social and cultural contexts this entails. One of the more nuanced critiques is provided by Larbi Sadiki, who argues broadly for an 'Arab' form of democracy, yet one that does not necessarily conform to Western norms and values, as for example by utilising capitalism as a foundational tenet.⁴³ Such innovation is sadly lacking from most of the studies of democratisation in the region.

Third, the literature addressing US democracy promotion in the Middle East, which grew exponentially during the course of the G. W. Bush administration's two terms, has largely focused on the implementation of the strategy in this 'infertile' ground. And this mainly in terms of the ways to overcome the various obstacles to democratisation identified, which range from the prevalence of authoritarianism, to the scarcity of civil society, or the presence of political Islam.⁴⁴ This is not to say the literature has been uncritical of US regional policy, far from it, but rather that as elsewhere, it has failed to critically interrogate the strategy of democracy promotion.⁴⁵ As Howard Wiarda claimed: 'who could be against democracy?'⁴⁶ Adopting an institutional definition of democracy, the academy has for the most part

⁴¹ Sen, A., 'Democracy as a Universal Value', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, Issue 3, 1999, p. 12.

⁴² Fukuyama, F., 'The End of History', *The National Interest*, Issue 16, (Summer) 1989.

⁴³ Sadiki, L., *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses*, Hurst, 2004. See also Sadiki, L., *Rethinking Arab Democratization: Elections Without Democracy*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

⁴⁴ Hawthorne, A., 'Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 44, (March) 2004; Dunne, M., 'Integrating Democracy Promotion into U.S. Middle East Policy', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 50, (October) 2004; Cofman Wittes, T., 'United States: Progress of the "Freedom Strategy" in the Middle East', *Arab Reform Bulletin*, Vol. 4, Issue 1, (February) 2006; Cofman Wittes, T., *Freedom's Unsteady March: America's Role in Building Arab Democracy*, Brookings Institution Press, 2008; Dunne, M., 'The Baby, the Bathwater, and the Freedom Agenda in the Middle East', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 1, (January) 2009; Hamid, S., 'Reviving Bush's Best Unfulfilled Idea: Democracy Promotion', *The Atlantic*, 13/9/2011, at <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/09/reviving-bushs-best-unfulfilled-ideademocracy-promotion/244935/>, accessed 26/7/2012.

⁴⁵ For instance, Marina Ottaway highlights the negative perceptions held by many in the region towards the US: 'If left unaddressed, this credibility gap will undermine even the most well-intentioned efforts by the United States to promote positive political change in the region.' See Ottaway, M., 'Promoting Democracy in the Middle East: The Problem of U.S. Credibility', *Carnegie Endowment Working Papers*, No. 35, (March) 2003.

⁴⁶ Wiarda, *The Democratic Revolution in Latin America*, p. 270.

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sought to facilitate the implementation of the strategy in the region. This is reflected in Michele Dunne, Amr Hamzawy and Nathan Brown's argument in the case of Egypt, that: 'renewed U.S. support for political reform in Egypt is not only compatible with U.S. security interests in the short term but vital to a stable, productive bilateral relationship in the long term.'⁴⁷

The present study represents the first time a Gramscian theoretical framework has been adapted and applied to the US strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East. It proposes moving beyond the security- and material- centric analyses which have predominated in the literature, to account for new foreign policy dynamics, and specifically the US's efforts to spread its political ideology in the Middle East. As such it offers a different prism through which to view the US's role in the Middle East, by applying the Gramscian concept of hegemony to US regional policy. Furthermore, in contrast to much of the literature, the present study provides a critical examination of the US strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East on a theoretical level, in terms of the US's *conceptualisation* of democracy, as well as on a practical level, in terms of the US's *implementation* of democracy promotion in the region. By offering a critical deconstruction of the ideology fostered by the US in the Middle East, the study offers an alternative to the essentialism that characterises the established literature. As a result, it provides a deeper understanding of US foreign policy in the Middle East as a whole, the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East specifically, and of both in terms of the case studies of Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait. It further contributes to the understanding of the processes of political, economic, social and cultural reform in the individual case studies, as well as the wider region.

⁴⁷ Dunne, M., Hamzawy, A., Brown, N., 'Egypt: Don't Give Up on Democracy Promotion', *Carnegie Policy Brief*, No. 52, (June) 2007.

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Chapter Outline

The outline of the study is as follows. The first chapter details an analytical framework adapted from the Gramscian theoretical approach. It defines the relevant theoretical concepts, relating each of them in turn to the strategy of democracy promotion. It then discusses the process of hegemony in the context of the Middle East. Building on the existing scholarship, the chapter provides a comprehensive structure with which to investigate the research question and hypothesis in-depth.

Chapter Two examines US democracy promotion in the aftermath of the Second World War, amidst its ascension onto the world stage. After considering the strategy's formative influences, it addresses its formulation and early implementation in the Philippines under the Reagan administration, and then in Panama under the G. H. W. Bush administration. These early US efforts to encourage transitions from authoritarianism to elite-based democratic governance illustrate the continuity of this strategy across administrations, and provide a broader context within which to situate contemporary US efforts in the Middle East.

The third chapter examines the formulation and implementation of the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East on a regional level. After accounting for the principal determinants of the US policy in the region, it analyses the longstanding relationships established with authoritarian governments there. The chapter then explores the respective approaches of the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations to political, economic, social and cultural reform in the Middle East. It outlines an ongoing shift in US strategy to the Middle East, from supporting coercive authoritarian governments to encouraging the emergence of more consensual, elite-based democracies.

Chapter Four explores US democracy promotion in Egypt. It first accounts for the growth of the US-Egyptian relationship, following the establishment of peace between Egypt and Israel in 1979. It then examines the Clinton administration's engagement of Egypt, and in particular the economic and civil society reform initiatives it spearheaded. An analysis of the G. W. Bush administration's efforts to encourage political, economic, social and cultural reform follows. The chapter

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illustrates the many challenges faced by the US in its attempts to promote democracy in the region, in the context of a close relationship with an authoritarian ally.

The fifth chapter examines US democracy promotion in Iraq. It first addresses US-Iraqi relations under the Reagan, G. H. W. Bush and Clinton administrations, amidst the Iran-Iraq war, the first Gulf War, and the policy of containment. The chapter then analyses the G. W. Bush administration's policy to Iraq, in terms of the invasion and occupation, and the array of reforms introduced as part of US efforts to transform the Iraqi state. It will finally assess the extent to which US strategy of democracy promotion in Iraq was successful or not. The chapter accounts for one of the most controversial episodes of US policy in the Middle East, and one that arguably tainted the strategy of democracy promotion as a whole.

Chapter Six analyses US democracy promotion in Kuwait. It first accounts for Kuwait's liberation by the US under G. H. W. Bush during the first Gulf War, which was partly on conditions of democratisation. It then examines the Clinton administration's policy to Kuwait, amidst its efforts to contain neighbouring Iraq, and under the G. W. Bush administration, which invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein. This chapter examines the strategy of democracy promotion in a unique political setting, but one also surrounded by regional threats which perpetually threatened to envelop it. The chapter explores the extent to which these crises undermined the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations' emphasis on democracy promotion in Kuwait.

The conclusion summarises the key arguments and findings of the study. It considers the regional implications of the strategy of democracy promotion, particularly in the context of the contemporary popular uprisings in the Middle East. It finally considers areas for future research that could draw upon the present study.

Chapter One

US Democracy Promotion

A Neo-Gramscian Analytical Framework

Chapter One

‘In all societies... two classes of people appear – a class that rules and a class that is ruled... The first class, always the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first, in a manner that is more or less legal, now more or less arbitrary and violent.’¹

– *Gaetano Mosca*

‘Theories of social morality are always the product of a dominant group which identifies itself with the community as a whole, and which possesses facilities denied to subordinate groups or individuals for imposing its view of life on the community. Theories of international morality are, for the same reason and in virtue of the same process, the product of dominant nations or groups of nations.’²

– *E. H. Carr*

Introduction

The Gramscian approach to international relations provides a valuable critical perspective with which to analyse US democracy promotion in the Middle East. Its origins lie in the scholarship of Robert Cox, who innovatively applied Antonio Gramsci’s theoretical insights, which had primarily addressed the domestic sphere, to the field of international relations in the early 1980s.³ A number of scholars have since contributed to this approach, a loose collective termed the ‘neo-Gramscian’ school; they include Stephen Gill, Kees Van Der Pijl and William Robinson amongst others.⁴ The value of the neo-Gramscian approach lies in the fact that it transcends some of the traditional assumptions and debates within IR theory. While acknowledging the state as a valid unit of analysis, neo-Gramscian scholars do not

¹ Mosca, G., *The Ruling Class*, McGraw-Hill, 1939, p. 50.

² Carr, E. H., *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939*, Palgrave Macmillan, New Edition, 2001, p. 74.

³ See Cox, R., ‘Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory’, *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1981; Cox, R., ‘Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method’, *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1983.

⁴ Relevant IR works influenced by Gramscian theory include: Cox, R., *Production, Power and World Order*, Columbia University Press, 1987; Augelli, E., Murphy, C., *America’s Quest for Supremacy and the Third World*, Pinter, 1988; Gill, S., *American Hegemony and the Trilateral Commission*, Cambridge University Press, 1990; Rapkin, D., (ed.), *World Leadership and Hegemony*, L. Rienner, 1990; Gill, S., (ed.), *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, 1993; Robinson, W., *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

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position it as exclusive, thus counteracting the reification of the state prevalent in much of the literature, especially that of a realist persuasion. Likewise they reject reductionist structuralist explanations of the international system. Utilising a historicist perspective, the neo-Gramscian approach analyses international relations by examining both the domestic and international levels, and accounting for political, economic, ethical and ideological variables and their mutual interactions.⁵ This allows for a depth and richness of analysis that the traditional theoretical approaches, such as realism or liberalism, simply do not provide. As Gill argues: ‘In international studies the Gramscian approach is an epistemological and ontological critique of the empiricism and positivism which underpin the prevailing theorisations.’⁶ This holistic approach has also allowed neo-Gramscian theory to largely avoid criticisms of economic determinism, so often levelled at Marxist-derived perspectives.⁷

This chapter will detail an analytical framework for the study, adapted from Gramscian theory, which will be used to examine US democracy promotion in the Middle East, and the case studies of Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait in particular. It will define the key tenets of Gramscian theory, exploring the concepts of hegemony, ideology, civil society, organic intellectuals and elite classes, and apply them to the strategy of democracy promotion. Finally the chapter will discuss the process of hegemony in the context of the Middle East.

⁵ Germain, R., Kenny, M., ‘Engaging Gramsci: International Relations Theory and the New Gramscians’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24, 1998, p. 7.

⁶ Gill, *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, p. 22.

⁷ Referring to traditional Marxist perspectives, Tony Smith argues that by ‘reducing all behaviour to economic interest, they cannot accord either autonomy or importance to political considerations having to do with calculations of national security or the balance of power.’ See Smith, T., *America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 364.

Chapter One

The Analytical Framework: Main Theoretical Elements

The Concept of Hegemony

Integral to any Gramscian analysis of US foreign policy, the concept of hegemony underpins this study. Gramsci himself provided a broad definition of hegemony, describing it as ‘the “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group.’⁸ He attributed this consent to the ‘prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.’⁹ The concept of hegemony rests on the assumption that ‘within a stable social order, there must be a substratum of agreement so powerful that it can counteract the division and disruptive forces arising from conflicting interests... that is, on the values, norms, perceptions and beliefs that support and define the structures of central authority.’¹⁰ In contrast to realist conceptions, which see hegemony as the leadership or dominance of one state over others, Gramscian theory offers a more complex, nuanced interpretation. This is achieved by distinguishing between *coercive* and *consensual* mechanisms of social control. In the context of the Middle East, it is possible to differentiate between contemporary authoritarian Arab states, which are heavily reliant on coercion, and the elite-based democracies the US seeks to eventually encourage in the region, based on more consensual forms of governance. The latter is a feature of the institutionalisation which characterises contemporary liberal democratic systems, which provides the means, in the context of forums, practices and procedures, for managing or resolving conflicts, as for example periodic elections. It is important to note that democracies do utilise coercive force, but as a secondary measure, deployed in the absence of successful hegemonic practices. Gramsci referred to this as ‘hegemony protected by the armour of coercion.’¹¹ But the attainment of hegemony is dependent on the *active* consent of the governed, and their *internalisation* of the promoted ideology as logical or ‘natural’. As Robinson argues: ‘a Gramscian hegemony involves the internalization on the part of subordinate classes of the moral and cultural values, the

⁸ Gramsci, A., *Selections From The Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, (edited and translated by Hoare, Q., Nowell Smith, G.), Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, p. 12.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Femia, J., *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process*, Clarendon Press, 1981, p. 39.

¹¹ Gramsci, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks*, p. 263.

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codes of practical conduct, and the worldview of the dominant classes or groups – in sum, the internalization of the *social logic* of the system of domination itself.¹² This occurs when elite groups ‘articulate a social vision which claims to serve the interests of all’, using incentives to mobilize support from subordinate groups, as well as preclude any opposition.¹³ It is achieved ultimately when the promoted ideology is voluntarily assimilated by society itself.¹⁴

The Ideology of Liberal Democracy

The essence of hegemony lies in the ideology promoted. As part of the hegemonic process, Gramsci stated:

previously germinated ideologies... come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to gain the upper hand, to propagate itself throughout society – bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a “universal” plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups.¹⁵

Gramsci saw ideology as a ‘spontaneous philosophy.’¹⁶ He argued that it is found first in ‘language itself, which is a totality of determined notions and concepts and

¹² Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 21.

¹³ Rupert, M., ‘Marxism and Critical Theory’, in Dunne, T., Kurki, M., Smith, S., (eds.), *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 157. Enrico Augelli and Craig Murphy argue: ‘Gramsci’s “hegemony” is the ability of a social group to exercise a function of “political and moral direction” in society. Other groups acknowledge the hegemon as having a leading role in society and a relatively wide political consensus supports the hegemon’s policy goals. A hegemon leads by responding to its allies “interests”, their motivations that derive from their positions in the mode of production (one of the two basic motivations of human action recognised by Gramsci), and by both responding to and helping to shape the ideal “aspirations” (the other basic motivation) that emerge within civil society.’ See Augelli, E., Murphy, C., ‘Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective and Example from Recent US Policy Toward the Third World’, in Gill, *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, p. 130.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that Gramsci perceived hegemony as fluctuating: from strong hegemony, which incorporates a high level of social integration and direct consensus between the elites and masses, through to weak hegemony, which is characterised by a high level of elite integration, but with little incorporation of the masses. See Femia, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, p. 47.

¹⁵ Gramsci, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks*, p. 181-2.

¹⁶ Gramsci cited in Jackson Lears, T., ‘The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 3, (June) 1985, p. 570.

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not just of words grammatically devoid of content.¹⁷ Second, it is found in ““common sense” [conventional wisdom] and good sense [empirical knowledge].¹⁸ Finally, in ‘popular religion and, therefore, also in the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting, which are collectively bundled together under the name of “folklore”.¹⁹ Rather than simply a ‘system of ideas and ideals’ as commonly defined, ideology is more appropriately described by Anthony Giddens as the ‘shared ideas or beliefs which serve to justify the interests of dominant groups.’²⁰ This is supported by Joseph Femia, who argues that ‘the reigning ideology moulds desires, values and expectations in a way that stabilizes an inegalitarian system.’²¹ Ideology ultimately provides the moral foundations for a system of government, and therefore its legitimation from society. In the case of the US, liberal democratic political values and free market economic principles, emanating from a broader Western political, economic, social and cultural legacy, constitute the primary elements of the promoted ideology.

This has involved a fundamental re-interpretation of the prevalent understanding of the term ‘democracy’ in the West. As Christopher Hobson notes:

the original connotations of the term *demokratia* [democracy]... have been obscured by the tendency to translate it simply as the people (*demos*) exercising power (*kratos*). While *demos* can be read as being the whole political community, it was generally

¹⁷ Gramsci cited in Jackson Lears, ‘The Concept of Cultural Hegemony’, p. 570. Language in particular assumes a critical function in establishing hegemonic practices, serving to subtly reinforce the promoted ideology by establishing discursive parameters. For instance, Michel Foucault argued that: ‘In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures.’ See Foucault, M., ‘The Order of Discourse’, in Young, R., (ed.), *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, p. 52. He claimed: ‘Discursive practices are characterized by the delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Thus, each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices.’ See Foucault, M., ‘History of Systems of Thought’, in Bouchard, D., (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 199. These practices are evidenced by the fact, as Kim Hutchings observes, that ‘it has become axiomatic to identify democracy, both as a positive and progressive feature.’ See Hutchings, K., ‘Modelling Democracy’, in Smith, H., (ed.), *Democracy and International Relations: Critical Theories/ Problematic Practices*, MacMillan Press, 2000, p. 39.

¹⁸ Jackson Lears, ‘The Concept of Cultural Hegemony’, p. 570.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ ‘Ideology’, *Oxford Dictionaries*, Oxford University Press, 2010, at <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ideology>, accessed 14/10/2012; Giddens, A., *Sociology*, Third Edition, Polity Press, 1997, p. 583.

²¹ Femia, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, p. 45.

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understood in a more narrow sense as one class of people: the poor multitude. This interpretation was found notably in authors such as Plato and Aristotle, and would structure the concept of democracy well into the 19th century. Kratos, meanwhile, has a forceful and almost violent dimension to its meaning that has been wholly lost. The term kratos “refers to might, strength, imperial majesty, toughness, triumphant power, and victory over others, especially through the application of force”.²²

Hobson concludes that: ‘What were thus taken as the defining elements of the Athenian experience – the direct and forceful exercise of power in a small polity by the poor many – formed the backbone of complaints and concerns which condemned democracy to disuse and irrelevance for centuries.’²³ This fear of a ‘tyranny of the majority’ led America’s founders to reject the notion of democracy at independence in 1776. Reflecting the predominant views of the time, none other than Thomas Jefferson argued: ‘A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where fifty-one percent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty-nine.’²⁴ In a similar vein, James Madison claimed that: ‘democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security, or the rights of property; and have, in general, been as short in their lives, as they have been violent in their deaths.’²⁵ It was only after President Wilson’s unprecedented call for the world to be ‘made safe for democracy’ in 1917, that the concept truly began to be rehabilitated in the West. And despite the fact that this rationale was not initially welcomed by the other Allied powers, it served to frame and justify the Allied war effort, and their subsequent victory was one of the primary catalysts of the normative expansion of democracy over the coming century.²⁶

The contemporary popular understanding of the term ‘democracy’ is therefore radically different from the dominant historical conception, which ultimately perceived it as ‘a dangerous and unstable form of rule which inevitably led to

²² Hobson, C., ‘Beyond the End of History: The Need for a “Radical Historicisation” of Democracy in IR’, *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 37, 2009, p. 647.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Jefferson, T., cited at <http://www.americanhistorycentral.com/entry.php?rec=453&view=quotes>, accessed 4/8/2012.

²⁵ Madison, J., cited at <http://madison.thefreelibrary.com/>, accessed 16/4/2010.

²⁶ Hobson, ‘Beyond the End of History’, p. 650.

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anarchy or despotism.²⁷ This has been accompanied by a revisionist discursive narrative, encouraged by the US alongside the West more broadly, in which democracy's history has been portrayed as one of linear progress, with liberal democracy as its teleological conclusion. According to such interpretations, democracy was invented in Athens and then passed to Rome, as the cradles of Western civilisation, before being moulded into its contemporary form by the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century. This simplistic abstraction of the concept of democracy from a grounded historical context, combined with its re-interpretation in universalist terms, has been a key element of US efforts to promote its ideology abroad.²⁸

Yet the form of democracy promoted by the US is not universal. Bhikhu Parekh observes that Western liberal democracy is 'culturally and historically specific' and therefore cannot claim 'universal validity.'²⁹ A key aspect of US strategy, in the progression from civilising to democratising, has involved the attempt to position the Western liberal democratic model as the only legitimate form of governance. Francis Fukuyama's 'End of History' thesis exemplifies the US's monocultural, teleological approach to democracy promotion; in it he makes reference to 'the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.'³⁰ As Bertrand Badie argues: 'Empires construct themselves around a specific culture that they intend to defend, promote, or possibly expand. But the universal is nothing more than a fictional and uncertain finality, realised precisely by negating the culture of the other.'³¹ The aim is the internalisation by other societies of the US's interpretation of democracy, and associated norms and values, as the natural order. The success of this process can be seen in the fact that the term itself has become almost universally

²⁷ Hobson, 'Beyond the End of History', p. 632.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 633.

²⁹ Parekh, B., 'The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy', in Held, D., (ed.), 'Prospects for Democracy', *Political Studies*, Vol. XL (Special Issue), 1992, p. 170.

³⁰ Fukuyama, F., 'The End of History', *The National Interest*, Issue 16, (Summer) 1989. Slavoj Žižek makes an interesting observation: 'it is easy to make fun of Fukuyama's notion of the End of History, but the dominant ethos today is "Fukuyamaian": liberal-democratic capitalism is accepted as the finally found formula of the best possible society.' See Žižek, S., *In Defense of Lost Causes*, Verso, 2008, p. 421.

³¹ Badie, B., *The Imported State: The Westernization of the Political Order*, Stanford University Press, 2000, pp. 48-9.

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identified with the liberal Western variant.³² Despite being far removed from its original context of ancient Athens, it has successfully suppressed competing concepts, for instance popular democracy.³³

The successful dissemination of the Western liberal democratic model has been achieved in part by exploiting abstract, idealised notions of ‘democracy’ and portraying them as representative of the liberal democratic system. While reference is often made to the French revolutionary slogan of ‘liberty, equality, fraternity’ as the expression of the democratic ideal, in practice liberal democratic systems have been based on a far more limited interpretation.³⁴ This was recognised by Robert Dahl, who noted the ‘distinction between democracy as an ideal system and the institutional arrangements that have come to be regarded as a kind of imperfect approximation of an ideal.’³⁵ The definition of elite-based democracy used in this study, namely ‘a system in which a small group actually rules and mass participation in decision-making is confined to leadership choice in elections carefully managed by competing elites’, is arguably applicable to most contemporary Western liberal democracies, including the US.³⁶ As Gaetano Mosca observed:

What happens in other forms of government – namely,
that an organized minority imposes its will on the
disorganized majority – happens also and to perfection,

³² For instance David Held identifies nine distinct models of democracy within the Western tradition alone. See Held, D., *Models of Democracy*, Second Edition, Polity Press, 1996.

³³ The absence of a fully elaborated theory of popular democracy has aided the hegemony of the liberal democratic definition. Briefly, popular democracy incorporates the concept of a direct form of democracy ‘based on referendums and other devices of empowerment and concretization of popular will.’ See ‘Popular Democracy’, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_democracy, accessed 7/4/2010. This is not to posit that the form of democracy practiced in ancient Athens was ideal. The disenfranchised included women, slaves and non-citizens. But it is also important to dispel the notion that the US has been a genuine democracy since its founding, as the popular narrative often holds. Its treatment of women and in particular its African-American minority discredits any such claim, especially when one considers that universal suffrage was only extended in the US in 1965. Moreover, American citizens who reside in the US Territories, such as Puerto Rico, Guam and the US Virgin Islands, who number over four million in total, are excluded from voting in Presidential and Congressional elections, the latter for voting-members of Congress. See Raskin, J., *Overruling Democracy: The Supreme Court versus The American People*, Routledge, 2003, pp. 35-6.

³⁴ The slogan of ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’ served as the basis of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose first article states: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’ See ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’, United Nations, 10/12/1948, at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml>, accessed 14/11/2012.

³⁵ Dahl, R., *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Yale University Press, 1971, p. 9.

³⁶ Robinson, W., ‘Globalization, the World System, and “Democracy Promotion” in U.S. Foreign Policy’, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 5, (October) 1996, pp. 623-4.

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whatever the appearance to the contrary, under the representative system. When we say that the voters “choose” their representative, we are using a language that is very inexact. The truth is that the representative *has himself elected by the voters.*³⁷

Focusing on ‘process, method and procedure’, liberal democratic systems are characterised by an emphasis on institutional arrangements, in particular periodic elections, which have come to constitute the primary source of legitimacy under contemporary Western norms of governance.³⁸ Referring to this reification of electoral legitimacy, Ralph Miliband observed that the ‘the act of voting is part of a much larger political process, characterized... by marked *inequality of influence*. Concentration on the act of voting itself, in which formal equality does prevail, helps to obscure the inequality, and serves a crucially important legitimating function.’³⁹ The inequality of contemporary democratic politics is reflected in the determinant role finance assumes in the electoral process. For example, in 2000 the US presidential candidates spent a combined total of \$500.9 million, in 2004 this figure rose to \$820.3 million, while in the 2008 elections a total of \$1.7 billion was spent.⁴⁰ In each of these cases the winning candidate had the financial advantage.⁴¹ This is especially relevant in the context of democracy promotion, given the emphasis placed by the US on the role of elections in the countries in which it operates.

The result has been the promulgation of an institutional definition of democracy. This, as Perry Anderson notes, embodies:

certain irrefutably concrete institutions: regular elections, civic freedoms, rights of assembly – all of which exist in the West and none of which directly threaten the class power of capital. The day-to-day system of bourgeois rule is thus based on the consent

³⁷ Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, p. 154.

³⁸ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 49.

³⁹ Miliband, R., *The State in Capitalist Society*, Basic Books, 1969, p. 194.

⁴⁰ Salan, J., ‘Spending Doubled as Obama Led Billion-Dollar Campaign’, *Bloomberg*, 27/12/2008, at <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=anLDS9WWPQW8&refer=home>, accessed 26/12/2009.

⁴¹ However this is not always the case. In the 1992 elections Clinton was considerably outspent by G. H. W. Bush and still won, albeit only by a 43% to 38% margin, while the unusual presence of an independent candidate, Ross Perot, was cited as a factor. See ‘1992 Presidential Election’, Roper Center, at http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/presidential/presidential_election_1992.html, accessed 26/12/2009.

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of the masses, in the form of the ideological belief that they exercise self-government in the representative State.⁴²

It is important to emphasise here that the institutions that comprise the promoted liberal democratic system, aside from periodic elections, include a broad range of political and civil rights, such as a legal system based on common and civil law for example. This is exactly what constitutes the basis of a *consensual* system of governance. By definition, a hegemonic ideology has to be expressed in universal terms, that is the norms and values promoted have to appeal broadly, on some level, to most groups in society.⁴³ An ideology can only achieve hegemonic status when it appears as universal, that is it provides a point of agreement between the various social groups, namely between elite and subordinate classes.⁴⁴ At the same time, the consensus provided by the liberal democratic system, manifested for example in the range of political and civil rights granted to citizens, does not undermine the fundamental position of the elite ruling class in society. If one is to believe that in a liberal democratic system of government every citizen has equal rights and opportunities, then this in essence means a belief in the lack of a ruling class.⁴⁵ This is patently false. Inequality – whether political, economic or social – is prevalent in liberal democracies, just as in other systems of government.

At the core of this institutional model of democracy, liberal democratic political values and free market economic principles, are posited as intrinsically linked.⁴⁶ Successive American administrations have argued that free markets are a prerequisite for democracy. For instance, the G. W. Bush administration claimed in the National Security Strategy of 2002 that:

A strong world economy enhances our national

⁴² Anderson, P., 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review*, Vol. 100, 1976, p. 42.

⁴³ Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations', pp. 168-9.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', p. 30.

⁴⁶ Toby Dodge argues that: 'The present hegemony of the United States has its origins in the faltering Pax Britannica of the late 19th century. At its ideational heart is the promotion of a specifically US political economy as the model for both personal and national affluence. American liberal democratic ideology has been successfully fused with the proselytizing celebration of the free market, homogenized as a transformative creed: "the market-place society".' See Dodge, T., 'The Sardinian, the Texan and the Tikriti: Gramsci, The Comparative Autonomy of the Middle Eastern State and Regime Change in Iraq', *International Politics*, Vol. 43, Issue 4, (September) 2006, p. 458.

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security by advancing prosperity and freedom in the rest of the world. Economic growth supported by free trade and free markets creates new jobs and higher incomes. It allows people to lift their lives out of poverty, spurs economic and legal reform, and the fight against corruption, and *it reinforces the habits of liberty* (emphasis added).⁴⁷

Yet as Robinson argues, this institutional definition, constitutes:

an intellectual and ideological attempt to resolve once and for all the... contradictory nature of democratic thought under capitalism, in which one side stresses the sanctity of private property, and therefore legitimizes social and economic inequalities and privileges which rest on the monopolization by minorities of society's material resources, while the other side stresses popular sovereignty and human equality.⁴⁸

This is reflected in the relevant literature, which has sought to establish the institutional definition of democracy as the only viable alternative. In *Democracy in Developing Countries*, a landmark study commissioned by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour Lipset argue that democracy signifies a 'political system, separate and apart from the economic and social system.'⁴⁹ They claim that 'a distinctive aspect of... [their] approach is to insist that issues of so-called economic and social democracy be separated from the question of governmental structure.'⁵⁰ In a similar vein, Samuel Huntington argued that: 'in all democracies, private ownership of property remains the basic norm in theory and in fact... The existence of such private power is essential to the existence of democracy.'⁵¹ He further claimed that: 'political democracy is clearly compatible with inequality in both wealth and income, and, in some measure, it may be dependent upon such inequality.'⁵² Huntington concludes that: 'Defining democracy in terms of goals such as economic well-being, social justice, and overall

⁴⁷ NSC, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (September) 2002, p. 17.

⁴⁸ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 52.

⁴⁹ Diamond, L., Linz, J., Lipset, S., (eds.), *Democracy in Developing Countries*, Vol. VI, Lynne Rienner, 1989, p. xvi. This series was commissioned by the NED for the purpose of informing US policy on political transitions in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Huntington, S., 'The Modest Meaning of Democracy', in Pastor, R., (ed.) *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum*, Holmes & Meier, 1989, p. 18.

⁵² *Ibid.*

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socioeconomic equity is not... very useful.’⁵³ This institutional definition constitutes an attempt to ‘de-politicise’ and ‘de-contextualise’ the liberal democratic ideology promoted by the US, presenting ‘democracy’ as a neutral, universal value that people everywhere aspire to, and which is manifested in a system of government applicable anywhere and everywhere. It conceals a paradox that lies at the heart of US democracy promotion: on the one hand an attempt has been made to conceptually separate the political system from the socio-economic order, while on the other free market principles are hailed by the US as integral to the development of liberal democracy. This is an inherent contradiction, which seeks to claim political equality while legitimising socio-economic inequality. ‘Democracy’ cannot be positioned as separate from the economic order, only to have its very existence predicated on it.

Civil Society and Hegemony

The locus of hegemony is the terrain of civil society.⁵⁴ This is based on the broad conception of the state utilised by Gramsci, who defined it as follows: ‘state = political society + civil society.’⁵⁵ He argued for example, that: ‘In Russia the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks.’⁵⁶ Positing an organic, intertwined relationship between state and civil society, Gramsci observed that: ‘the State, when it wants to initiate an unpopular action or policy, creates in advance a suitable, or appropriate, public opinion; that is, it organizes and centralizes certain elements of civil society.’⁵⁷ Civil society therefore serves as the focal point of the hegemonic process, it is here that the promoted ideology’s norms

⁵³ Huntington, ‘The Modest Meaning of Democracy’, p. 18.

⁵⁴ The term civil society is used here to describe the wide range of organisations that are not part of the state or family. These include political and social organisations, the media, professional organisations, trade unions, community organisations, cultural and religious groups, and so forth.

⁵⁵ Gramsci, *Selections From The Prison Notebooks*, p. 263.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁵⁷ Gramsci cited in Femia, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, p. 27. But the fact that contemporary elites, both political, economic and otherwise, often transcend the spheres of state and civil society, and furthermore that civil society has to operate within the confines of the state, that is according to its rules and regulations, renders this distinction somewhat academic. See Femia, *Gramsci’s Political Thought*, p. 28.

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and values are debated, contested and if accepted, eventually internalised.⁵⁸ This is a consensual process, and should not be confused with any form of imposition.

The US has subsequently sought to integrate the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East with a range of economic, social and cultural policies, seeking to ‘penetrate not just the state, but civil society... and *from therein* exercise control.’⁵⁹ The US has attempted to influence Middle Eastern societies directly, based on the assumption that their cooption is essential to realising a hegemonic system based on consent. This is reflected in the repeated statements by US policy-makers that civil society constitutes a bedrock for democratisation in the Middle East. For instance President G. W. Bush claimed: ‘Liberty takes hold in different places in different ways, so we must continue to adapt and find innovative ways to support those movements for freedom. The way to do so is to stand with civil society groups, human rights organisations, dissidents, independent journalists and bloggers, and others on the leading edge of reform.’⁶⁰ It is further demonstrated by the G. W. Bush administration’s emphasis on funding civil society programmes in the region, which continued a pattern established by Clinton. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of 2002 and the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative of 2004 are two examples. These initiatives were devised with the intention of cultivating civil society in the region, in the belief that ‘reform in the GME [Greater Middle East] must be driven internally.’⁶¹ The perception of the integral role of civil society owes much to the experiences of the Eastern European states during the Soviet era. There civil society organisations, most notably the Solidarity trade union movement in Poland, assumed a central role in overthrowing Soviet proxy

⁵⁸ Randall Germain & Michael Kenny argue that: ‘hegemony is achieved within the sphere of civil society by consensual means, when a leading class sheds its immediate economic-corporate consciousness and universalizes (within the constraints of the national-popular character) its norms and values, thereby establishing a political and ethical harmony between dominant and subordinate groups. A dominant class rules, but effectively with and over, rather than against, subaltern classes.’ See Germain, Kenny, ‘Engaging Gramsci’, p. 17.

⁵⁹ Robinson, ‘Globalisation, the World System, and “Democracy Promotion” in U.S. Foreign Policy’, p. 643.

⁶⁰ Bush, G. W., ‘Speech by George W. Bush, President of the United States, to the OECD’, 13/5/2008, at http://www.oecd.org/document/50/0,3343,en_2649_201185_40835506_1_1_1_1,00.html, accessed 8/12/2009.

⁶¹ ‘G-8 Greater Middle East Partnership’, 13/2/2004, at <http://www.albab.com/arab/docs/international/gmep2004.htm>, accessed 20/8/2012.

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governments, with covert US assistance.⁶² This eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and its communist ideology.

The Role of Organic Intellectuals

The strategy of democracy promotion has been formulated with the assistance of the academic community, in the US and the West more broadly, which has provided its theoretical underpinnings as well as its legitimation. The role of such ‘organic intellectuals’ is central to the concept of hegemony. Gramsci himself argued: ‘Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function, not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.’⁶³ Enrico Augelli and Craig Murphy claim that: ‘the role of intellectuals is to represent the ideas that constitute the terrain where hegemony is exercised. They must supply intellectual and moral support for the hegemon’s dominant political role to the point that, what is “politics” to the productive [and potentially hegemonic] class becomes ‘rationality’ to the intellectual class.’⁶⁴

The academic community has long assumed an important role in shaping US foreign policy. For example, the US’s emphasis on ‘modernising’ developing countries during the 1960s and 1970s was driven by the works of Walt Rostow, Seymour Lipset, and Samuel Huntington amongst others.⁶⁵ This was in part the product of research programs established by the US government following the Second World War, which sought to obtain academic input on foreign policy matters. One notable example is the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology (MIT), which was established by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

⁶² The Reagan administration cooperated clandestinely with the Vatican to provide extensive support to Solidarity, so as to ‘hasten the dissolution of the communist empire.’ See Bernstein, C., ‘The Holy Alliance’, *Time Magazine*, 24/6/2001, at <http://www.time.com/time//article/0,9171,159069,00.html>, accessed 4/8/2012.

⁶³ Gramsci cited in Salamini, L., ‘Towards a Sociology of Intellectuals: A Structural Analysis of Gramsci’s Marxist Theory’, in Martin, J., (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers*, Vol. III, Routledge, 2002, p. 69.

⁶⁴ Augelli, Murphy, ‘Gramsci and International Relations’, p. 131.

⁶⁵ See Rostow, W., *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, 1971; Lipset, S., *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, Heinemann, 1960; Huntington, S., *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Yale University Press, 1968.

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in 1950, and counted Rostow amongst its affiliates.⁶⁶ The strategy of democracy promotion itself was devised with the assistance of intellectuals such as William Douglas and Michael Samuels, who served as consultants on the Reagan administration's 'Project Democracy'.⁶⁷ These contributions were crucial to the initial formulation and implementation of the strategy in the 1980s.⁶⁸ The role of organic intellectuals, and their relationship to the state, is reflected in their frequent interchanges in the US between academic and policy positions; one example is Larry Diamond, regarded as one of the leading academic experts on democratisation, who also served as a senior advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq during 2004.

Organic intellectuals also assume an important role in the countries in which US democracy promotion is implemented. As local elites, exiles and so forth, such individuals assume a crucial role in conveying and legitimising the promoted ideology in wider society, in this case the various political, economic and social reforms incorporated under the strategy of democracy promotion. This was evidenced in the aftermath of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, when the US recruited an array of Iraqi exiles to introduce 'democracy' to the country, as part of the Iraq Reconstruction and Development Council.⁶⁹ Yet as Robinson argues:

individuals brought into US "democracy promotion" programs are not simple puppets of US policy and their organizations are not necessarily "fronts"... Very often they involve genuine local leaders seeking to further their own interests and projects in the context of internal political competition and conflict and of heavy US influence over the local scene. Moreover, old and new middle classes, professional and bureaucratic strata may identify their interests with the integration

⁶⁶ Clement, C., 'Organic Intellectuals and the Discourse on Democracy: Academia, Foreign Policy Makers, and Third World Intervention', *New Political Science*, Vol. 25, Issue 3, 2003, pp. 355-6.

⁶⁷ See Samuels, M., Douglas, W., 'Promoting Democracy', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1981.

⁶⁸ This is discussed further in Chapter Two.

⁶⁹ This is discussed at length in Chapter Five. See Jehl, D., 'After Effects: The Advisers; Iraqi Exiles, Backed by U.S., Return to Reinvent a Country', *New York Times*, 4/5/2003, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/04/world/aftereffects-the-advisers-iraqi-exiles-backed-by-us-return-to-reinvent-a-country.html?page-wanted=all>, accessed 19/1/2012.

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or reintegration of their countries into global capitalism under a US canopy.⁷⁰

The Role of Elite Classes

The implementation of the strategy of democracy promotion has been facilitated by an elite transnational class, composed of individuals, groups and organisations with broadly corresponding interests to those of the US, political but primarily economic.⁷¹ A by-product of globalization, this transnational elite has emerged as a cornerstone of US hegemonic efforts, due to a strategic presence in key areas such as government, business and civil society. As Cox observes, hegemony is:

not merely an order among states. It is an order within a world economy with a dominant mode of production which penetrates into all countries and links into other subordinate modes of production. It is also a complex of international social relationships which connect the social classes of the different countries. World hegemony is describable as a social structure, an economic structure, and a political structure; and it cannot be simply one of these things but must be all three.⁷²

This transnational elite assumes an integral role in merging these structures, based on a perception of shared interests with the US, thus expediting the spread of the liberal democratic ideology across national borders. Badie argues that in the Middle East, this process of ‘Westernization’ has supported ‘the rise of an entirely new elite whose lasting quality is linked to the safekeeping, indeed the reinforcement, of importation’ of Western political structures.⁷³ As a result some neo-Gramscians are inclined to de-emphasise the role of the nation-state in the international system. For example, Robinson claims that: ‘dominant classes utilize foreign policy in their interests. There are no such things as US “national security” or “national interests”...

⁷⁰ Robinson, W., ‘What to Expect from US “Democracy Promotion” in Iraq’, *New Political Science*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (September) 2004, pp. 445-6.

⁷¹ A contemporary example can be found in the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), whose management has repeatedly emphasised the diverse makeup of its student body. See ‘LSE - The Student Community’, at <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/graduateProspectus2010/whyLSE/theStudentCommunity.aspx>, accessed 9/12/2009. Nationality serves as the primary criterion of this ‘diversity’, but in reality the vast majority of students share more in common amongst themselves in terms of class, social and educational backgrounds, than they do with the plurality of their own nationals. These individuals collectively constitute an example of an emergent transnational elite.

⁷² Cox, ‘Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations’, pp. 171-2.

⁷³ Badie, *The Imported State*, p. 112.

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dominant groups exercise inordinate influence over the instruments of foreign policy in pursuit not of “national” but of class or group interests.⁷⁴ While there is merit in this argument, as transnational elites do assume a demonstrable role in the hegemonic process, and their importance is clearly concomitant to increasing levels of globalization, ultimately nation-states and their interests predominate in the international system. Although the rationales behind US foreign policy are multiple, complex, and sometimes conflicting, it is formulated in essence on the basis of interests identified, framed and articulated in national terms, with democracy promotion no exception. While it would be naïve to deny the impact of transnational elites on US foreign policy, it would be more so to underestimate the contemporary role of the nation-state in international relations.

⁷⁴ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 26.

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Hegemony as a 'Process' and the Middle East

It is important to dispel the notion that hegemony is a monolithic shroud, formulated and implemented in the form of democracy promotion by the US, in an imposition from above. Andreas Bieler and Adam Morton refer to this when they argue: 'If hegemony is understood as an "opinion-moulding activity", rather than brute force or dominance, then consideration has to turn to how a hegemonic social or world order is based on values and understandings that permeate the nature of that order.'⁷⁵ As Femia argues: 'ideological consensus, especially when it is firmly rooted, is bound to assume the guise of a collective pursuit of rational interests. But we should not forget that the very definition of what is 'rational' or 'pragmatic' itself conceals evaluative propositions as well as a particular cognitive framework.'⁷⁶ This is supported by Cox, who claims that: "'Reality" is not only the physical environment of human action but also the institutional, moral and ideological context that shapes thoughts and actions.'⁷⁷ The analytical framework utilised by a given individual is shaped by the dominant ideology; this 'conditioning' is achieved principally through civil society and its institutions, as for example the media. Hegemony therefore 'filters through structures of society, economy, culture, gender, ethnicity, class and ideology.'⁷⁸ Hegemony is a *process*, fluid never fixed, constantly undergoing input and adjustment, its success dependent on an ability to absorb and disperse dissent, rather than directly suppress it. Its inherently malleable nature affords a relative autonomy for the societies it envelops, in terms of day-to-day political, economic and socio-cultural affairs. This in comparison to more coercive, authoritarian mechanisms of social control. In contemporary democratic societies, an example of this relative autonomy is the widespread belief that individual members of society can influence the social order through their enfranchisement. This belief, as Anderson observes: '[is not an] acceptance of the superiority of an acknowledged ruling class (feudal ideology), but credence in the democratic equality of all citizens in the government of the nation – in other words, disbelief in the existence of any

⁷⁵ Bieler, A., Morton, A., 'A Critical Theory Route to Hegemony, World Order and Historical Change: Neo-Gramscian Perspectives in International Relations', *Capital & Class*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2004, p. 87.

⁷⁶ Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought*, p. 41.

⁷⁷ Cox, R., 'Reconsiderations', in Cox, R., (ed.), *The New Realism: Perspectives on Multilateralism and World Order*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1997, p. 252.

⁷⁸ Bieler, Morton, 'A Critical Theory Route to Hegemony, World Order and Historical Change', p. 87.

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ruling class.⁷⁹ Therefore portrayals of hegemony and the liberal democratic ideology that fosters it, as merely rigid, cynical, as well as coherently planned exercises of domination, offer overly simplistic explanations of US foreign policy and indeed the concept of hegemony itself.

This is relevant in terms of the relationship between the US and the societies it seeks to incorporate into its hegemony. As Jackson Lears argues: ‘No top-down model of domination can explain the complex growth, dissolution, or transformation of hegemonic cultures.’⁸⁰ He claims that: ‘On the contrary, new forms of cultural hegemony can bubble up from below, as historical blocs fashion a world view with wide appeal... Dominant groups can revitalize a hegemonic culture by incorporating what they imagine to be the instinctual vitality of the lower orders.’⁸¹ This addresses an important criticism of neo-Gramscian approaches, which is the failure to account satisfactorily for the interaction between hegemonic and subaltern classes. It is raised by Mustapha Pasha when he states that: ‘The initial conditions for the establishment of hegemony are seen as patently *internal* to the core. Hegemony then becomes a process of *diffusion* from North to South.’⁸² He argues that: ‘In the neo-Gramscian formulation, passivity rules the cultural worlds of the subalterns as they readily succumb to global hegemony.’⁸³ In the context of the Middle East, it is therefore crucial to acknowledge the role of local societies, which have to varying degrees resisted the perceived imposition of the promoted liberal democratic ideology.

This is exemplified by the various Islamist groups, which collectively comprise the main political opposition force in the Middle East, although in the cases of Tunisia and Egypt they have recently ascended into power. They are likely to be the primary beneficiaries of political reform in the region, as demonstrated by the electoral successes of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (2005, 2012), Hamas in the Palestinian Territories (2006), and Ennahda in Tunisia (2011). Yet despite advocating political reform, Islamists have widely condemned the US’s strategy of democracy promotion, particularly under the G. W. Bush administration. Their

⁷⁹ Anderson, ‘The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci’, p. 30.

⁸⁰ Jackson Lears, ‘The Concept of Cultural Hegemony’, p. 587.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Pasha, M. K., ‘Islam, “Soft” Orientalism and Hegemony: A Gramscian Rereading’, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (December) 2005, p. 547.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 546.

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criticisms are particularly relevant given their ascendant role in the politics of the Middle East, and serve to illustrate local arguments against the US's efforts to promote its ideology in the region. While clearly not the only relevant socio-political group in the region, or the only one to oppose US policy, and moreover in the recognition that 'Islamists' do not fall under a single, coherent grouping, it is precisely because of their political ascendancy in the Middle East that they are addressed in detail in the present study.

Islamist opposition primarily relates to the reform initiatives' foreign sponsorship, perceiving it as 'dictated by US strategic interests rather than by a genuine desire to empower Arab citizens.'⁸⁴ They cite the US' legacy of interventionism in the region, alongside the perception that the US lacks the credibility to promote democracy in the Arab world.⁸⁵ The latter is a belief widespread in the region. As Larbi Sadiki argues: 'Perhaps the most negative aspect of the American promotion of democracy and human rights lies in its veiled imperialist motivation, both in the past during the height of the ideological standoff between communism and now as the United States further asserts its sole superpower status.'⁸⁶ Some of the Islamists' most salient criticisms concern the impact of US democracy promotion on the societal level, which is particularly relevant in the context of hegemony. For example, Carrie Wickham argues that Islamists fear that 'American pressure, whether for educational reforms, women's political participation, or life-style freedoms available to citizens in the West, will erode the religious character of Arab society and weaken the core institution of the family.'⁸⁷ This is compounded by the perception that the US, through its civil society organisations and programmes, demands Arab tolerance of behaviours that are still not widely accepted in the West, as for example homosexuality.⁸⁸ In short many, although clearly not all, Islamists are opposed to certain fundamental aspects of the promoted liberal democratic ideology; these include the separation of religion and state, a legal system based on common and

⁸⁴ Wickham, C., 'The Problem with Coercive Democratization: The Islamist Response to the U.S. Democracy Reform Initiative', *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, 2004, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 1-2. See Ottaway, M., 'Promoting Democracy in the Middle East: The Problem of U.S. Credibility', *Carnegie Endowment Working Papers*, No. 35, (March) 2003, pp. 9-10.

⁸⁶ Sadiki, L., *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses*, Hurst, 2004, p. 341.

⁸⁷ Wickham, 'The Problem with Coercive Democratization', p. 7.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

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civil law, and gender equality amongst others. While their views are not representative of Middle Eastern societies as a whole, they indicate the challenges faced by the US in its efforts to promote its ideology and establish hegemony. More so however, this demonstrates the latent potential of Islamist groups to serve as a counter-hegemonic force, utilising the ideology of political Islam to pursue hegemony in the Middle East in their own right.⁸⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the analytical framework that underlies the present study. Drawing on Gramscian theory, it has defined a series of key theoretical concepts, adapting them so as to allow the comprehensive examination of the research question and hypothesis. First the chapter explored the concept of hegemony, which is central to this study. It then examined the crucial role assumed by ideology in the hegemonic process, and what the term ‘democracy’ actually means in the context of US foreign policy. The chapter then demonstrated how the achievement of hegemony is rooted in civil society and its institutions, and examined the respective roles played by organic intellectuals and elite classes within this process. It then explored the process of hegemony in the context of the Middle East, highlighting the challenges faced by the strategy of democracy promotion from counter-hegemonic forces under the banner of political Islam. The following chapters draw consistently on this analytical framework, grounding it in empirical evidence from the case studies of Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait, but also the Middle East more generally and beyond.

⁸⁹ See Butko, T., ‘Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (May) 2004.

Chapter Two

US Democracy Promotion

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‘The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.’¹

– *President Woodrow Wilson*

Introduction

The promotion of ‘democracy’ abroad has been one of the constants in US foreign policy over the last century.² Accompanying the US’s rise as a superpower, its liberal democratic ideology has been a powerful presence in its foreign policy, used repeatedly to frame and justify its actions. President Wilson’s argument in favour of the US’s entry into the First World War, in order to ‘make the world safe for democracy’, was an early manifestation of this trend. Under the Wilson administration interventions in Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua were all justified, at least partially, in the name of democracy. Wilson claimed that he would ‘teach the South American republics to elect good men.’³ To varying extents, and with significantly different motivations and emphases, most subsequent American administrations have incorporated democracy promotion into their foreign policies, in some form or another. Harry Truman’s support of ‘national self-determination’ in the British, French and Dutch colonies after 1945, Ronald Reagan’s invocations of ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ in the struggle against the ‘evil empire’ of the Soviet Union during the 1980s, and Bill Clinton’s ‘Operation Uphold Democracy’ in Haiti in 1994 are all examples. The promotion of democracy has therefore proved a ‘defining characteristic of American foreign policy for the greater part of the twentieth century.’⁴

¹ Wilson, W., ‘U.S. Declaration of War with Germany’, 2/4/1917, at <http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/usawardeclaration.htm>, accessed 16/8/2012.

² Gerges, F., *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 5.

³ Wilson, W., cited in Bethell, L., (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. IV, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 107.

⁴ Cox, M., Ikenberry, J., Inoguchi, T., (eds.), *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 10.

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This chapter will argue that US democracy promotion in the aftermath of the Second World War has constituted a pursuit of hegemony. First it will account for the strategy's formative influences: American exceptionalism, national security and capitalism. It will then address the early formulation of democracy promotion, and its development into an organised, coherent strategy. The chapter will then examine the implementation of the strategy in the Philippines under the Reagan administration, and in Panama under George H. W. Bush. Reference will also be made to Chile and Nicaragua, as cases that spanned both administrations. These countries have been selected because they demonstrate the nature and scope of early US efforts to encourage transitions from authoritarianism to elite-based democratic governance, as well as the continuity of this strategy across administrations. Furthermore, they provide a broader comparative context in which to situate the analysis of US democracy promotion in the Middle East, and the selected case studies of Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait.

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US Democracy Promotion: The Formative Influences

The strategy of democracy promotion incorporates a diverse array of influences. Three of these predominate: the legacy of American exceptionalism, the impact of national security considerations, and the belief in the virtues of free market capitalism. These influences inform the main aims of the strategy: first the maintenance of stability in the countries concerned, achieved through the promotion of elite-based democracies committed to free market principles; and second the achievement of hegemony, namely the internalisation by other societies of the US's liberal democratic ideology. The first formative influence, American exceptionalism, refers to the belief that the US 'differs qualitatively from other developed nations, because of its unique origins, national credo, historical evolution, and distinctive political and religious institutions.'⁵ Michael Barone summarises this belief succinctly when he claims that: 'Every nation is unique, but America is the most unique.'⁶ The term 'exceptionalism' was coined by Alexis de Tocqueville, who attributed it to America as a country of immigrants and the first modern democracy.⁷ Its antecedents lie in the notion of 'manifest destiny' prevalent in the nineteenth century, which held that America was destined by providence to expand its influence across the North American continent, an expansion seen as both just and inevitable.⁸ Contemporary manifestations of American exceptionalism draw on similar themes, that of a 'chosen people' mandated by 'providence' to proselytize America's liberal democratic norms and free market values, but are interpreted on a much larger scale.⁹ This is reflected in the belief that the US, as the sole remaining superpower, has an altruistic responsibility to encourage and foster democracy abroad as 'America's great gift to the world.'¹⁰ It is accompanied by a staunch belief in the US model of

⁵ Koh, H., 'America's Jekyll and Hyde Exceptionalism', in Ignatieff, M., (ed.), *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, Princeton University Press, 2005, p. 225. Seymour Lipset identifies the main themes of American exceptionalism as liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez faire. See Lipset, S., *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, W. W. Norton, 1996, p. 26.

⁶ Barone, M., 'A Place Like No Other', *U.S. News & World Report*, 20/6/2004, at <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/040628/28intro.htm>, accessed 16/8/2012.

⁷ See De Tocqueville, A., *Democracy in America*, New Edition, Wordsworth Editions, 1998.

⁸ During the 1840s the notion of manifest destiny was used by Jacksonian Democrats to justify the annexations of the Oregon and Texas territories, as well as areas of Mexico.

⁹ Montem, J., 'The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy', *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (Spring) 2005, p. 119.

¹⁰ Muravchik, J., 'Foreign Assistance Legislation for Fiscal Years 1992-93', Statement in House of Representatives, 1992, p. 414.

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governance as ‘the natural, rational solution for every country.’¹¹ The above were reflected in the G. W. Bush administration’s National Security Strategy of 2002, which begins: ‘The great struggles of the 20th century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom – and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.’¹²

With regards to the strategy of democracy promotion, the belief in American exceptionalism manifests itself in two main forms. The first, ‘exemplarism’, maintains that the US should passively promote liberal democratic values through example. As Walter Russell Mead argues, the US can ‘better serve the cause of universal democracy by setting an example rather than by imposing a model.’¹³ The second, ‘vindicationism’, holds that the US should actively promote democracy, using ‘its power to “vindicate the right” in an otherwise illiberal world.’¹⁴ Vindicationism is evinced in the missionary impulse of US democracy promotion, as exemplified by the Wilson administration. Jonathan Monten observes that:

Both exemplarism and vindicationism follow from a foreign policy nationalism that regards the United States as an instrument of democratic change in the international system... At stake between them are a series of normative and causal claims about the nature of international politics and the capacity of U.S. power to produce major social and political change abroad; they are in effect competing theories of democracy promotion.¹⁵

While both reflect an idealised conception of the US and its role in the international system, the doctrine of American exceptionalism has been espoused by most contemporary administrations. An embodiment of ‘vindicationism’, President Reagan famously described America as ‘a shining city upon a hill.’¹⁶ He claimed

¹¹ Gastil, R., ‘Aspects of a US campaign for Democracy’, in Goldman, R., Douglas, W., (eds.), *Promoting Democracy: Opportunities and Issues*, Praeger, 1988, p. 25.

¹² NSC, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (September) 2002.

¹³ Mead, W. R., *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2001, p. 182.

¹⁴ Monten, ‘The Roots of the Bush Doctrine’, p. 125; See also Brands, H., *What America Owes the World: The Struggle for the Soul of Foreign Policy*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

¹⁵ Monten, ‘The Roots of the Bush Doctrine’, p. 2.

¹⁶ Reagan, R., ‘Farewell Address to the Nation’, 11/1/1989, at <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1989/011189i.htm>, accessed 16/8/2012.

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that: ‘after 200 years, two centuries, she still stands strong and true to the granite ridge, and her glow has held no matter what storm. And she’s still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home.’¹⁷ Such ethereal references have become a staple feature of US administrations’ rhetoric regardless of their political hue. They reflect the vital role that the concept of democracy assumes in the American national identity and its ideology. Abstract narratives such as the above have helped colour the prisms through which US society, and more importantly its policy-makers, view the international system and subsequently rationalise the US’s role within it. Jeane Kirkpatrick argues: ‘no idea holds greater sway in the mind of educated Americans than the belief that it is possible to democratize governments, anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances.’¹⁸ Deborah Madsen concludes that: ‘American exceptionalism permeates every period of American history and is the single most powerful agent in a series of arguments that have been fought down the centuries concerning the identity of America and Americans.’¹⁹ And while most states have incorporated the language of exceptionalism to varying degrees, it is the US’s dominant position in the international system that ultimately ascribes its ideology such significance.

The second formative influence of the strategy of democracy promotion relates to US national security, and in particular a belief in the validity of the democratic peace theory; this as the basis of a more stable and secure world, and indeed a more pro-American one. As Larry Diamond argues: ‘A more democratic world would be a safer, saner, and more prosperous world for the United States.’²⁰ The democratic peace hypothesis is based on two claims: first that: ‘democracies almost never fight each other and very rarely consider the use of force in their mutual relations’, and second that: ‘other types of relations are much more conflictual including

¹⁷ Reagan, ‘Farewell Address to the Nation’.

¹⁸ Kirkpatrick, J., *Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics*, Simon and Schuster, 1982, p. 30.

¹⁹ Madsen, D., *American Exceptionalism*, Edinburgh University Press, 1998, p. 1.

²⁰ Diamond elaborates: ‘Democratic countries do not go to war with one another or sponsor terrorism against other democracies. They do not build weapons of mass destruction to threaten one another. Democratic countries are more reliable, open, and enduring trading partners, and offer more stable climates for investment.’ See Diamond, L., ‘Promoting Democracy’, *Foreign Policy*, No. 87, (Summer) 1992, p. 30.

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democracies' interactions with non-democracies.²¹ The US has long seen the expansion of liberal democracy as panacea of sorts, particularly after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Thus G. H. W. Bush asserted that: 'in a world where we are the only remaining superpower, it is the role of the United States to marshal its moral and material resources to promote a democratic peace.'²² This was developed further by the Clinton administration, which emphasised 'democratic enlargement' as its major foreign policy theme.²³ Clinton argued for instance that: 'the best strategy to ensure security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere.'²⁴ The advocacy of the democratic peace was taken to unprecedented heights by G. W. Bush, who extolled its virtues throughout his presidency, claiming that: 'History has proven that free nations are peaceful nations, that democracies do not fight their neighbours.'²⁵ Therefore while the strategy of democracy promotion is directed in particular towards the maintenance of states' internal stability, as one of the strategy's main aims, in a broader sense it also relates to inter-state stability, namely the absence of conflict between democratic states posited above.

The US's application of democratic peace theory to the contemporary international system is flawed in a number of important ways. First is the theory's etatist focus, given that as Omar Encarnación notes: 'the classic view of war as an epic struggle between rival states has been out of date for decades.'²⁶ This was exemplified by the post- September 11, 2001 war on terrorism, which immersed the US into a conflict with predominantly asymmetrical forces.²⁷ Given that intra- rather than inter- state conflicts are the primary source of instability in the Middle East, but also across the

²¹ Hurrell, A., 'Democratic Peace', in McLean, I., McMillan, A., (eds.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

²² Bush, G. H. W., 'Address at West Point', 5/1/1993, at <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3433>, accessed 16/8/2012.

²³ See Brinkley, D., 'Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine', *Foreign Policy*, No. 106, (Spring) 1997, especially pp. 114-16.

²⁴ Clinton, W. J., 'State Of The Union Address', 25/1/1994, at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=50409>, accessed 16/8/2012.

²⁵ Bush, G. W., cited in Encarnación, O., 'Bush and the Theory of the Democratic Peace', *Global Dialogue*, Vol. 8, No. 3-4, (Summer/Autumn) 2006. This belief was reflected in numerous statements by senior G. W. Bush administration figures. For example, Richard Perle stated that: 'The lesson of history is that democracies don't initiate wars of aggression, and if we want to live in a peaceful world, then there's very little we can do to bring that about more effective than promoting a democracy.' See 'Transcript for Richard Perle: The Making of a Neoconservative', PBS Think Tank Interview, 14/11/2002, at <http://www.pbs.org/thinktank/transcript1017.html>, accessed 13/02/2009.

²⁶ Encarnación, O., 'The Follies of Democratic Imperialism', *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (Spring) 2005, p. 50.

²⁷ Ibid.

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international system, this clearly undermines the contemporary relevance of the theory. Second is the fact that democratic peace theory is primarily applicable to established liberal democracies, as ‘only stable and mature democracies possess the structural and normative requirements believed to make democracies averse to war.’²⁸ This is supported by Randall Schweller, who argues that: ‘while there is good evidence to support democratic peace theory, the vast majority of democracies have, until recently, been prosperous, satisfied, fully developed, Western, and insular states. Changes in the values of these critical variables warrant great caution in extending the democratic peace proposition into the future.’²⁹ This point is of particular relevance to the Middle East, given that the majority of states there are either partial or total autocracies, while a few may be said to be undergoing the early stages of a process of democratisation, such as Egypt or Tunisia. As Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder argue:

It is probably true that a world where more countries were mature, stable democracies would be safer and preferable for the United States. However, countries do not become mature democracies overnight... In this transitional phase of democratization, countries become more aggressive and war-prone, not less, and they do fight wars with democratic states.³⁰

This conclusion is clearly relevant to the contemporary Middle East, with significant implications for the strategy of democracy promotion. It also has implications for US efforts to encourage a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which are based on the premise that political and economic reform in the region will expedite this.³¹

The third formative influence behind the strategy of democracy promotion is free market capitalism. The US’s commitment to the expansion of free market economies

²⁸ Encarnación, ‘The Follies of Democratic Imperialism’, p. 51.

²⁹ Schweller, R., ‘US Democracy Promotion: Realist Reflections’, in Cox, et al., *American Democracy Promotion*, pp. 43-4.

³⁰ Mansfield, E., Snyder, J., ‘Democratization and the Danger of War’, *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (Summer) 1995, p. 5.

³¹ This was reflected in comments by President G. W. Bush: ‘If you’re a supporter of Israel, I would strongly urge you to help other countries become democracies. Israel’s long-term survival depends upon the spread of democracy in the Middle East.’ See Bush, G. W., ‘Remarks by President Bush on the War on Terror’, 12/12/2005, at <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/remarks-by-president-bush-on-the-war-on-terror-55495697.html>, accessed 18/6/2012. This is discussed further in Chapter Three.

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is long-standing, and arguably deeper engrained in its foreign policy than the promotion of democracy. Nonetheless there is a significant degree of overlap between the two, and they should be seen as mutually reinforcing components of an overarching hegemonic strategy. Time and again US policy-makers have stressed the belief that liberal democracy and capitalism share an intrinsic relationship. This is reflected in the National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) 'Statement of Principles and Objectives', which claims: 'The experience of recent decades has confirmed that an open market economy is a *prerequisite* of a democratic political system' (emphasis added).³² US Secretary of State Warren Christopher argued in 1994 that:

Democratic nations are far less likely to go to war with each other and far more likely to respect international law. They are more likely to promote open markets and free trade, and to pursue policies that lead to sustained economic development. Democratic nations are critical to building a world where... the rule of law protects property, contracts, patents, and the other essential elements of free-market economies.³³

These comments reflect the influence of the democratic peace thesis, but also the synthesis of liberal democratic political values and free market economic principles that underlies the US strategy of democracy promotion. This has been evidenced as early as the administration of President Wilson, who in his effort to make the world 'safe for democracy', was also seeking to expand US commercial interests. Following the 'Open Door Notes' of 1899, Wilson argued that:

Since trade ignores national boundaries, and the manufacturer insists on having the world as a market, the flag of his nation must follow him, and the doors of the nations which are closed against him must be battered down... Concessions obtained by financiers must be safeguarded by ministers of state, even if the sovereignty of unwilling nations be outraged in the process. Colonies must be obtained or planted, in order

³² 'NED Statement of Principles and Objectives', at <http://www.ned.org/publications/statement-of-principles-and-objectives>, accessed 16/8/2012.

³³ Warren, C., 'America's Leadership, America's Opportunity', *Foreign Policy*, No. 98, (Spring) 1995, pp. 14-5.

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that no useful corner of the world may be overlooked or left unused.³⁴

William Robinson observes: ‘Wilson was the first to “promote democracy” and he did so in order to secure the best conditions for international capital accumulation.’³⁵

The assumption of an intrinsic relationship between liberal democracy and capitalism stems from the influence of the ‘modernization’ thesis, which gained credence in Western policy circles during the 1960s.³⁶ In essence it argued that ‘developing’ countries should simulate the processes of modernisation undergone by ‘developed’ countries. Walt Rostow, who identified various stages of economic growth, and in particular a ‘takeoff into growth’ stage ushering in the ‘age of high mass consumption’ exemplified by Western societies, is perhaps its best known advocate.³⁷ His theoretical assumptions have informed much of the US’s approach to democracy promotion over the years.³⁸ The modernization thesis has promulgated an overly simplistic assumption of a linear, teleological relationship between economic growth and democratisation. Seymour Lipset’s assertion that: ‘all the various aspects of economic development – industrialization, urbanization, wealth, and education – are so closely interrelated as to form one major factor which has the political correlate of democracy’ is indicative of this perspective.³⁹ This assumption is increasingly disputed. As Benjamin Barber notes:

[the] rhetoric that assumes capitalist interests are not only compatible with but actively advance democratic ideals, translated into policy, is difficult to reconcile with the international realities of the last fifty years.

³⁴ Wilson, W., cited in Robinson, W., ‘Promoting Capitalist Polyarchy: The Case of Latin America’, in Cox, et al., *American Democracy Promotion*, p. 313. US Secretary of State John Hay proposed an ‘Open Door’ policy in China, under which all the major foreign powers would have equal trade access. This was intended to prevent the creation of separate spheres of influence, in essence advocating a free, open market.

³⁵ Ibid. This is supported by Gordon Levin. See Levin, N. G., *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America’s Response to War and Revolution*, Oxford University Press, 1980.

³⁶ More broadly, this assumption is rooted in the influence of liberal political theorists such as Immanuel Kant, who posited that: ‘The spirit of commerce, which is incompatible with war, sooner or later gains the upper hand in every state.’ See Kant, I., *Perpetual Peace*, Filiquarian Publishing, 2007, p. 39.

³⁷ See Rostow, W., *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, 1971.

³⁸ For instance Rostow is cited as a major influence by USAID. See ‘USAID History’, at http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/usaidhist.html, accessed 19/2/2010.

³⁹ Lipset, S., *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, Second Edition, Heinemann, 1983, p. 41.

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Market economies have shown a remarkable adaptability and have flourished in many tyrannical states from Chile to South Korea, from Panama to Singapore.⁴⁰

The contemporary Chinese state is a prime example of this, having successfully combined authoritarian governance with a rapidly expanding free market economy.⁴¹ Moreover as Michael Cox notes: ‘Democratic reform, on the other hand, need not lead to a flourishing capitalist economy – witness the example of post-communist Russia.’⁴²

⁴⁰ Barber, B., *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalisation and Tribalism are Reshaping the World*, Ballantine Books, 1996, p. 14.

⁴¹ Thomas Carothers makes an interesting observation when he notes that China’s contemporary economic success has increased the attractiveness of ‘strong-hand’ models of governance in the developing world. See Carothers, T., ‘Responding to the Democracy Promotion Backlash: Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing’, 8/6/2006, at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18416> &prog=zgp&proj=zdl,zme, accessed 22/2/2010. This is particularly relevant given China’s ascendant role in the Middle East, which is attributable primarily to economic motivations. China imports large amounts of oil from the region, while the Middle East constitutes a substantial market for Chinese arms exports.

⁴² Cox, M., ‘Wilsonianism Resurgent? The Clinton Administration and the Promotion of Democracy’, in Cox, et al., *American Democracy Promotion*, p. 232.

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US Democracy Promotion: The Formulation of the Strategy

While the concept of ‘democracy’ has assumed an important role in US foreign policy since the early twentieth century, with most administrations utilising it periodically to frame and justify policy, it did not manifest itself as part of an organised, coherent US strategy until later. For most of the twentieth century the US was at best ambivalent about promoting political reform, instead preferring to support authoritarian systems of government abroad. As Robinson notes: ‘Authoritarian arrangements were judged to be the most expedient means of assuring stability and social control in the Third World.’⁴³ Following the Second World War, and in the context of the emerging Cold War, one of the primary rationales behind this support of authoritarianism was to combat the expansion of the Soviet Union and its rival communist ideology. Iran’s Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953, Guatemala’s Jacobo Árbenz in 1954, Ghana’s Kwame Nkrumah in 1966, and Chile’s Salvador Allende in 1973, are all examples of democratically-elected leaders overthrown as a result of US intervention, in response to perceived communist or overly nationalist inclinations.⁴⁴ US policy in these cases aimed at the destabilisation of the incumbent elected governments, and their replacement by authoritarian proxies with the ability to ensure stability and US interests.

However, by invariably utilising coercion to govern, these proxies’ eventually provoked popular opposition. With their legitimacy questioned by significant portions of their own citizenry, as well as the international community in some cases, in the face of popular protest most were eventually overthrown. The Shah of Iran, a firm US ally, who ruled with an iron fist for twenty-five years after Mosaddegh’s removal, was overthrown in 1979. The same fate befell General Augusto Pinochet in Chile, who assumed power in the US-backed coup d’état that displaced Allende. Despite extensive use of repression, widely condemned internationally, Pinochet did

⁴³ Robinson, W., *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 15.

⁴⁴ For example, the threat posed by the Árbenz administration to US interests was explained by Charles Burrows, an official in the State Department’s Inter-American Affairs Bureau: ‘Guatemala has become an increasing threat to the stability of Honduras and El Salvador. Its agrarian reform is a powerful propaganda weapon; its broad social program of aiding the workers and peasants in a victorious struggle against the upper classes and large foreign enterprises has a strong appeal to the populations of Central American neighbors where similar conditions prevail.’ See Burrows, C., cited in Gleijeses, P., *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*, Princeton University Press, 1991, p. 365.

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not succeed in eliminating popular opposition, and this eventually forced elections in 1989. What the above demonstrate is that in essence, *instability* was the predominant legacy of US political interventions in these countries and elsewhere.

The challenge for the US therefore was to develop more subtle, nuanced forms of social control, the aim consistently remaining the maintenance of stability. One of the first to address this challenge was William Douglas, who later served as a consultant on the Reagan administration's 'Project Democracy'.⁴⁵ Douglas argued that the US should promote 'regimented democracy' in place of 'authoritarianism'. He claimed:

That a firm hand is needed is undeniable... However, it is harder to accept the claim that only dictatorship can provide the sufficient degree of firmness... democratic government may be able to do the same things as dictatorship to overcome centripetal social forces: use police to stop riots, strike bargains with the various groups to keep them reasonably satisfied, and call out the army when peaceful means fail.⁴⁶

Drawing on the tenets of the modernisation thesis, Douglas argued that the US needed to address political underdevelopment through 'political aid', transplanting US 'structures' so as to ensure political stability.⁴⁷ He asserted that:

There is no denying the need for organizational structures by which the modernized elite can exercise tutelage... It is common experience that in obtaining the desired behaviour from a balky mule, a balky child, or a balky peasant, the real key is to find just the right balance between carrot and stick... Democracy can also provide a sufficient degree of regimentation, if it can build up the mass organization needed to reach the

⁴⁵ 'Project Democracy' was an early initiative by the Reagan administration to 'advocate the principles of democracy, support those people and institutions committed to democratic development, build and reinforce bonds based on shared values between people and nations, and counter the spread of totalitarianism through the active interchange of ideas and vigorous democratic institutions.' Summary of Project Democracy submitted to the US Congress in 1983, cited in Carothers, T., *In the Name of Democracy: U.S. Policy Toward Latin America in the Reagan Years*, University of California Press, 1993, p. 200. Originally envisaged as a multi-agency effort to be funded centrally through the US Information Agency (USIA), it was largely superseded by the establishment of the NED. See Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*, pp. 200-206.

⁴⁶ Douglas, W., *Developing Democracy*, Heldref, 1972, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. xiii, 43.

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bulk of the people on a daily basis. Dictatorship has no monopoly on the tutelage principle.⁴⁸

The arguments outlined by Douglas provided an early intellectual template for a gradual transformation of US foreign policy over the next few decades, from supporting coercive to consensual systems of government, manifested in the form of the strategy of democracy promotion.

After the Second World War the US had made some attempts to introduce ‘political aid’ programs, but these were monopolised by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and registered no significant success; one example in the 1950s was a proposed ‘Freedom Academy’. After a series of revelations about the CIA’s conduct, in direct violation of its charter, its public image and consequently its ability to credibly administer political aid programs abroad was significantly compromised.⁴⁹ This led the Katzenbach Commission of 1967 to recommend that the US ‘promptly develop and establish a public-private mechanism to provide public funds openly for overseas activities of organisations which are adjudged deserving, in the national interest, of public support.’⁵⁰ This was seen as increasingly important by US policy-makers, who were seeking to combat the Soviet Union’s extensive funding of political parties, organisations and trade unions abroad – in other words counteract its ideological challenge. An organised response began to take place in 1979, when the American Political Foundation (APF) was founded as a ‘private sector vehicle to provide for the international exchange of political leaders and technology.’⁵¹ Bi-partisan, it sought to encourage interaction between the main US political parties and their ideological counterparts abroad. The APF brought together many leading representatives of politics, business, labour and academia. Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brezinski both sat on the APF board, while it was chaired by Allan

⁴⁸ Douglas, *Developing Democracy*, pp. 21-22.

⁴⁹ The CIA had been covertly funding ‘the U.S. National Students Association, labor programs, journalists’ associations, [and] religious organizations.’ See Samuels, M., Sullivan, J., ‘Democratic Development: A New Role for U.S. Business’, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1986, p. 168. The damage to the CIA’s reputation was compounded during the Church Commission hearings of 1973, which exposed a litany of abuses of power, including attempts to assassinate foreign leaders and subvert foreign governments, as well as monitoring the domestic political activities of US citizens. See Hersh, S., ‘Huge C.I.A. Operation Reported in U.S. Against Antiwar Forces, Other Dissidents in Nixon Years’, *New York Times*, 22/12/1974.

⁵⁰ Cited in Samuels, Sullivan, ‘Democratic Development’, p. 168.

⁵¹ Samuels, Sullivan, ‘Democratic Development’, p. 169.

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Weinstein, who later served as the first president of the NED.⁵² It provided a forum for elite policy-makers, businessmen, academics and others to begin the formulation of a strategy of ‘democracy promotion’. William Douglas and Michael Samuels, the latter who also served as a consultant on the Reagan administration’s ‘Project Democracy’, articulated the case for such a strategy:

Programs to strengthen friendly political movements in other countries are one of the foreign policy arms of a modern great power. Until this century, there were three instruments for such efforts: diplomatic, economic, and military. This triad retains its primacy today, but it has been supplemented by two additional instruments, whose utility has been greatly increased by modern worldwide communications. One is propaganda – or to use a more neutral term – information programs. Through radio, television, press releases, libraries, cultural exchanges, and publications, nations try to improve their images abroad, popularize their ideologies, and win support for their foreign policies. The other new policy instrument – aid to friendly political organizations abroad – is related to information programs, but goes an important step further: Such aid helps build up political actors in other polities, rather than merely seeking to influence existing ones. In international affairs, organization is now as important as issues, just as has always been the case in domestic politics.⁵³

Douglas and Samuels called for the creation of a ‘new semiprivate foundation specifically for political work abroad’, which the eventual establishment of the NED fulfilled.⁵⁴

The Reagan administration was the first to comprehensively formulate and implement a strategy of democracy promotion. In the context of the Cold War, Reagan sought to position ‘democracy’ as the organising principle of US foreign policy, in the belief that ‘freedom’ could defeat the ‘totalitarian’ ideology of the

⁵² Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, pp. 89-90.

⁵³ Samuels, M., Douglas, W., ‘Promoting Democracy’, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1981, pp. 52-3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

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Soviet Union.⁵⁵ Bobby Inman, a former deputy director of the CIA, claims: ‘Reagan came in with very simple and strongly held views... It is a valid point of view that he saw the collapse [of communism] coming and he pushed it – hard.’⁵⁶ In a landmark speech to the British Parliament in 1982, Reagan called on the West to ‘foster the infrastructure of democracy.’⁵⁷ He then tasked the APF with conducting a study ‘to determine how the U.S. can best contribute – as a nation – to the global campaign for democracy now gathering force.’⁵⁸ Funded by a \$300,000 grant from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the APF recommended ‘the establishment of a bipartisan, private, non-profit corporation’ – to be called the NED.⁵⁹ Reagan expanded on this in the National Security Council’s (NSC) Decision Directive 77, in which he called for the strengthening of US ‘public diplomacy’ or propaganda, linking it explicitly to national security.⁶⁰ The directive established a committee responsible for ‘planning, coordinating and implementing international political activities in support of United States policies and interests relative to national security.’⁶¹ These activities included ‘aid, training, and organisational support for foreign governments and private groups to encourage the growth of democratic political institutions and practices.’⁶² The directive called explicitly for the increased engagement of ‘political parties’, ‘business’, ‘labor’, ‘universities’ and the ‘press’

⁵⁵ Reagan, R., ‘Address to Members of the British Parliament’, 8/6/1982, at <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1982/60882a.htm>, accessed 15/8/2012.

⁵⁶ Inman, B., cited in Bernstein, C., ‘The Holy Alliance’, *Time Magazine*, 24/6/2001, at <http://www.time.com/time/article/0,9171,159069,00.html>, accessed 4/8/2012.

⁵⁷ Reagan, ‘Address to Members of the British Parliament’. This formed part of a concerted effort to undermine the Soviet Union. As Carl Bernstein notes: ‘During the first half of 1982, a five-part strategy emerged that was aimed at bringing about the collapse of the Soviet economy, fraying the ties that bound the U.S.S.R. to its client states in the Warsaw Pact and forcing reform inside the Soviet empire. Elements of that strategy included: The U.S. defense buildup already under way, aimed at making it too costly for the Soviets to compete militarily with the U.S. ... Covert operations aimed at encouraging reform movements in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland... Financial aid to Warsaw Pact nations calibrated to their willingness to protect human rights and undertake political and free-market reforms... Economic isolation of the Soviet Union and the withholding of Western and Japanese technology from Moscow... Increased use of Radio Liberty, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe to transmit the Administration's messages to the peoples of Eastern Europe.’ See Bernstein, ‘The Holy Alliance’.

⁵⁸ Reagan, ‘Address to Members of the British Parliament’.

⁵⁹ Lowe, R., ‘Idea to Reality: NED at 25’, at <http://www.ned.org/about/history>, accessed 3/3/2010.

⁶⁰ See NSC, ‘Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security’, NSDD 77, 14/1/1983, at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-077.htm>, accessed 14/8/2012. Richard Nelson defines propaganda succinctly: ‘a systematic form of purposeful persuasion that attempts to influence the emotions, attitudes, opinions, and actions of specified target audiences for ideological, political or commercial purposes through the controlled transmission of one-sided messages (which may or may not be factual) via mass and direct media channels.’ See Nelson, R., *A Chronology and Glossary of Propaganda in the United States*, Greenwood Press, 1996, p. 232-3.

⁶¹ NSC, ‘Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security’.

⁶² *Ibid.*

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amongst others, key segments of civil society, and crucial to the achievement of hegemony.⁶³ It also specified the involvement of the US Information Agency (USIA), whose mandate was to ‘understand, inform, and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest’, but is more accurately described by Nicholas Cull as an ‘overseas propaganda operation.’⁶⁴ One of the defining features of the Reagan administration was its savvy use of public diplomacy to undermine the Soviet Union, and which played an understated role in facilitating its eventual collapse in 1991. Reagan himself attested to this: ‘public diplomacy represents a powerful force, perhaps the most powerful force at our disposal, for shaping the history of the world.’⁶⁵

The Reagan administration’s efforts to position ‘democracy’ as a central tenet of US foreign policy, and promote it in an organised, systematic fashion, must ultimately be seen in this context. As Robinson observes of subsequent US interventions: ‘divested of the rhetoric, the “democracy promotion” programs in the Philippines, Chile, Nicaragua, Haiti, and elsewhere were, in fact, large-scale political operations in foreign policy, involving heavy doses of political action, coercive diplomacy, covert political warfare, and psychological operations.’⁶⁶ This marked the beginning of an ongoing, long-term transition in US foreign policy, from supporting authoritarian political systems to elite-based democracies. The foundations for this transition were laid with the establishment of the NED in 1983. At the NED’s core was a ‘new and generous program of grants to aid anti-Communist political institutions, labour unions and newspapers in the third world.’⁶⁷ These grants were administered by the NED, which operates through four main organisations: the National Democratic Institute of International Affairs (NDI) and the Republican Institute of International Affairs (NRI), as the representatives of the two main American political parties internationally; the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), an affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce; and the Free Trade Union Institute (FTUI), which

⁶³ NSC, ‘Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security’.

⁶⁴ ‘USIA’s Mission Statement’, at <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/usia/usiahome/oldoview.htm#overview>, accessed 5/3/2010. For a detailed overview of the USIA’s role during the Cold War, see Cull, N., *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Diplomacy (1945-1989)*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, especially chapters 10 and 11.

⁶⁵ Reagan, R., cited in *Ibid.*, p. 442.

⁶⁶ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 79.

⁶⁷ Raymond, W., ‘Interview’, 12/12/1995, cited in Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency*, p. 421.

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was superseded in 1997 by the Solidarity Center. These organisations collectively target the pillars of civil society – political parties, business and labour organisations – which constitute the locus of hegemony. The rationale behind the establishment of the NED was reflected in comments made by Allen Weinstein, the NED's first president: 'A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.'⁶⁸ As a result the NED is portrayed as a 'private nonprofit foundation' of 'nongovernmental character', which serves to create the appearance of a separation between the NED and the US government; an association which might otherwise prejudice its work abroad.⁶⁹ In fact it is almost wholly funded by the US Congress, and specifically through appropriations from USIA, USAID and the State Department, which demonstrates its role as an effective branch of the US government.⁷⁰ The NED's activities are supplemented by a wide range of private organisations focusing on democracy promotion, ranging from Freedom House to the Carter Center to the US Institute for Peace; indeed the majority of the NED's work is sub-contracted out to such organisations. The NED is therefore only one component of a wide-ranging 'infrastructure' of democracy promotion, whose aims correspond in theory and in practice, with those of the US government and the strategy of democracy promotion.

⁶⁸ Weinstein, A., cited in the *Washington Post*, 21/9/1991.

⁶⁹ See 'About NED', at <http://www.ned.org/about>, accessed 5/3/2010. The selection of the name 'National Endowment for Democracy' has the effect of connoting a benevolent, apolitical image. It follows in the mould of earlier grant-making National Endowments, for the Arts and for the Humanities. See Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 88. The legislative Act that established the NED explicitly states: 'the Endowment will not be considered an agency or establishment of the U.S. government.' See US House of Representatives, 87 – Title VI, Section 602[b], 1983. The NED's status as a private organisation limits the degree of official oversight it is subject to. Barbara Conry notes the 'the inherent contradiction of a publicly funded organization that is charged with executing foreign policy (a power expressly given to the federal government in the Constitution) yet exempt from nearly all political and administrative controls.' See Conry, B., 'Loose Cannon: The National Endowment for Democracy', *Cato Foreign Policy Briefing*, No. 27, 8/11/1993, at <http://www.cato.org/pubs/fpbriefs/fpb-027.html>, accessed 5/3/2010.

⁷⁰ Cavell, C., *Exporting 'Made-In-America' Democracy: The National Endowment for Democracy & U.S. Foreign Policy*, University Press of America, 2002, p. 94. The USIA was absorbed into the State Department in 1999. Robinson argues: 'There are close links. The fact that the NED receives its funding from Congress is not the most direct. NED operations are designed in the state department and the White House, often in coordination with the CIA; and everything is undertaken in liaison with local US embassies.' See Gindin, J., 'The United States, Venezuela, and "Democracy Promotion": William I Robinson Interviewed', *Open Democracy*, 3/8/2005, at http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-protest/venezuela_2730.jsp, accessed 6/3/2010.

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US Democracy Promotion: The Implementation of the Strategy

The Philippines was the first country in which democracy promotion was implemented methodically to achieve a political transition from authoritarianism to elite-based democracy. The success of the strategy there led to its implementation throughout Latin America, including in Chile, Nicaragua and Panama. The examples below serve as a testament to the longevity of the strategy devised by the Reagan administration, which was progressively refined by subsequent administrations, and deployed across the world.

The Philippines

The US invasion of the Philippines in 1898, during the Spanish-American war, brought the country under its direct control for almost half a century.⁷¹ This extended presence was portrayed as an altruistic exercise in tutelage.⁷² As Woodrow Wilson argued: ‘We must govern as those who learn and they must obey as those who are in tutelage. They are children and we are men in these deep matters of government and justice.’⁷³ This established the basis of US-Filipino relations, with the latter positioned firmly as the dependent partner. Thus in return for granting the Philippines independence in 1946, the US imposed punitive terms on the country, including a large military presence and a series of preferential economic agreements, which ensured a close future role for the US in Filipino affairs.⁷⁴ The US was aided

⁷¹ President McKinley claimed: ‘When I next realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess I did not know what to do with them... And one night late it came to me this way... 1) That we could not give them back to Spain – that would be cowardly and dishonorable; 2) that we could not turn them over to France and Germany – our commercial rivals in the Orient – that would be bad business and discreditable; 3) that we not leave them to themselves – they are unfit for self-government – and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain’s wars; and 4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them.’ See McKinley, W., ‘Remarks to Methodist Delegation’, 21/11/1899, cited in Schirmer, D., Shalom, S., (eds.), *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance*, South End Press, 1987, p. 22.

⁷² The US used the Filipino educational system to disseminate its nascent ideology. It imported American teachers who taught in English, discouraged expressions of nationalism, and promulgated ideas of Western racial superiority. See Constantino, R., ‘The Miseducation of the Filipino’, in Schirmer, Shalom, *The Philippines Reader*, pp. 45-9.

⁷³ Wilson, W., ‘The Ideals of America’, 26/12/1901, at <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/02dec/wilson.htm>, accessed 15/8/2012. This is a reflection of the pedagogical approach the US, alongside the West more generally, has long adopted towards the ‘developing’ world – whether it has been seeking to civilize, modernise or democratise. This is evidenced in the reductionist terminology used to identify these countries and regions, for instance ‘developing’, ‘emerging’, ‘periphery’, ‘Third World’ and so forth.

⁷⁴ The Philippines hosted the Subic Bay Naval Base and the Clark Air Base until 1991, two of the most important American military facilities in the Pacific, and the largest outside the US. An early example of the economic agreements was the Bell Trade Act of 1946, which in exchange for the

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by its prior incorporation of the Filipino elite into its colonial administration, which had created a narrow, but important social base of support, that largely shared its interests.⁷⁵ Over the next few decades after independence, a series of civilian administrations were elected, the majority of which were marred by graft and corruption. The US remained closely involved throughout this period, distributing military and economic aid, as well as administering 'political aid' through the CIA.⁷⁶ In 1972 martial law was imposed by President Ferdinand Marcos, in response to a growing popular opposition movement comprised of trade unions, students and peasant groups, as well as a Communist insurgency. These challenges were exacerbated by an ongoing economic crisis, and were indeed in part responses to the burgeoning social and economic inequalities in the Philippines. This initiated a prolonged period of authoritarian rule under Marcos, supported by the US through aid totalling hundreds of millions of dollars.⁷⁷ For the US, especially in the setting of the Cold War, the maintenance of the stability of the state was paramount. A report for the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations stated:

U.S. officials appear prepared to accept that the strengthening of presidential authority will... enable President Marcos to introduce needed stability; that these objectives are in our interest; and that... military bases and a familiar government in the Philippines are more important than the preservation of democratic institutions which were imperfect at best.⁷⁸

Over the next decade popular opposition to Marcos's rule continued to gather momentum, despite harsh political repression and human rights violations. The

release of \$800 million in post-Second World War reconstruction funds, guaranteed the US amongst others a preferential tariff system and equal access to the Philippines' natural resources, whilst prohibiting the manufacture of products that could compete with US-based industries. William Clayton, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, described certain provisions of the act as 'clearly inconsistent with our promise to grant the Philippines genuine independence.' See Clayton, W., cited in Jenkins, S., *American Economic Policy Toward the Philippines*, Stanford University Press, 1954, p. 62.

⁷⁵ Schirmer, Shalom, *The Philippines Reader*, pp. 35-6.

⁷⁶ For an overview of the CIA's operations in the Philippines during the 1940s and 1950s, see Blum, W., *The CIA: A Forgotten History - US Global Interventions Since World War 2*, Second Impression, Zed, 2004, pp. 39-44.

⁷⁷ Pace, E., 'Autocrat With A Regal Manner, Marcos Ruled For 2 Decades', *New York Times*, 29/9/1989, at <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/09/29/obituaries/autocrat-with-a-regal-manner-marcos-ruled-for-2-decades.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>, accessed 15/8/2012.

⁷⁸ Staff Report for US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 'Korea and the Philippines: November 1972', cited in Schirmer, Shalom, *The Philippines Reader*, p. 168.

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opposition was galvanised following the assassination of leading opposition figure Benny Aquino Jr., which served to unite broad segments of Filipino society against Marcos, including the middle classes, politicians, business leaders and representatives of the Church. In the face of a deteriorating economic climate, a product of the mismanagement and endemic 'crony capitalism' which characterised his rule, Marcos' position appeared increasingly untenable; this especially in light of the growing alienation of the economic elite. With the stability of state and society under increasing threat in the Philippines, the US began to examine the alternatives, seeking to facilitate a peaceful transition from authoritarianism to democracy.

The Reagan administration implemented a strategy of democracy promotion in the Philippines to manage the transition and shape it to US interests.⁷⁹ A NSC Study Directive claimed in 1984:

The United States has extremely important *interests* in the Philippines... Political and economic developments in the Philippines threaten these interests... The U.S. does not want to remove Marcos from power to destabilize the GOP [Government of the Philippines]. Rather, we are urging revitalization of democratic institutions, dismantling "crony" monopoly capitalism and allowing the economy to respond to free market forces, and restoring professional, apolitical leadership to the Philippine military to deal with the growing communist insurgency. These efforts are meant to stabilize while strengthening institutions which will eventually provide for a peaceful transition.⁸⁰

The US intervention focused on the pillars of civil society – political parties and organisations, business and labour – and was implemented largely through the NED. First the US successfully pressured Marcos into holding elections, which took place in early 1986. It then convinced the two leading opposition figures, Corazon Aquino, the widow of Benny Aquino Jr. and a potent symbol of opposition to Marcos, and

⁷⁹ This reflected a marked change in the Reagan administration's stance towards Marcos. Vice President G. H. W. Bush told Marcos whilst visiting Manila in 1981: 'We love your adherence to democratic principles and to the democratic process.' Bush, G. H. W., cited in Russell, G., 'A Test for Democracy', *Time Magazine*, 3/2/1986, at

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,960545,00.html>, accessed 15/8/2012.

⁸⁰ NSC Study Directive, cited in Schirmer, Shalom, *The Philippines Reader*, pp. 322-3.

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Salvador Laurel, previously a Marcos loyalist, to run on a joint ticket.⁸¹ This was to prevent a divided opposition, and also to ensure a centre-right outlook consistent with US interests.⁸² US support for the opposition was so blatant that George Russell noted: '[US] Ambassador Bosworth is referred to by some Marcos aides as the "leader of the opposition".'⁸³ With regard to business, the NED funded the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) through CIPE 'to support the restoration of private enterprise values in place of the 'crony capitalism' system as a key element in the overall transition to democracy.'⁸⁴ The US also targeted the labour movement, funding the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), the only officially recognised union under Marcos.⁸⁵ The purpose was to counter the rising influence of the left-wing Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) union, which opposed Marcos and had adopted a nationalist/populist stance. This emphasis on civil society was complemented by the US's engagement of key figures in the military, including Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos. It was their refusal to countenance Marcos' attempts to fraudulently claim victory in the elections of 1986, which brought the country to the precipice of civil revolt, that ultimately led to Marcos relinquishing authority.⁸⁶

As part of an overarching strategy of democracy promotion, the individual policies listed above each contributed to the transition from authoritarianism to elite-based democracy, and from coercive to consensual mechanisms of social control. The purpose of the US intervention was twofold. First, it attempted to manage the transition when it became clear that it was inevitable, so that it did not result in a popular uprising and further destabilisation. Second, it sought to ensure that any

⁸¹ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 128.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Russell, 'A Test for Democracy'.

⁸⁴ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 128.

⁸⁵ The TUCP received approximately \$7 million from 1984 to 1991 from the NED via FTUI; it was the second largest recipient of FTUI funds worldwide after Poland's Solidarity. See Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, pp. 135-7. These funds were distributed by the Asian American Free Labour Institute (AAFLI). Its representative in the Philippines, Bud Phillips, claimed: 'Imagine if you have \$100,000 to give out to families in \$500 chunks. Your stock goes way up, faster than the stock of any of the militant labor groups... Our help saved the free trade union movement here.' See Phillips, B., cited in Bronstein, P., Johnston, D., 'U.S. Funding Anti-Left Fight in Philippines', *San Francisco Examiner*, 21/7/1985.

⁸⁶ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 128. Immediately before resigning Marcos contacted US Senator Paul Laxalt, a confidante of Reagan, to gauge the White House's position. He was advised to 'cut and cut cleanly.' See Johnson, B., *The Four Days of Courage: The Untold Story of the People who Brought Marcos Down*, The Free Press, 1987, pp. 232-4.

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subsequent Filipino government would be dependent on the US, and therefore amenable to its interests. Clearly it would be an oversimplification to suggest that the US initiated and then controlled every, or even most, aspects of the transition; but rather that it sought, by engaging the various elements of civil society and the military, and through extensive political, economic and military aid, to ensure the best outcome possible for US interests. This proved to be the case with the Aquino administration, which was largely accommodating to the US, abandoning early pledges of land reform and reconciliation with the Communist insurgents, and in Aquino's own words: 'placing our faith in the private sector as the stimulus of growth.'⁸⁷ Over the next few years the US sought to consolidate the transition, again through political, military and economic aid. It supported Aquino through six coup attempts from 1986 to 1987, and in the most serious attempt in 1989, it deployed the US Air Force and threatened economic sanctions and military intervention. This starkly underlined the dependency of the Aquino administration. The 1986 Assistance for Democracy Act provided \$700 million in economic and military aid.⁸⁸ This was followed in 1989 by the Multilateral Assistance Initiative, organised by the G. H. W. Bush administration, which brought together a range of international donors, private and governmental, who pledged several billion dollars in return for the implementation of free market reforms. With the election of Fidel Ramos to the presidency in 1992, elite-based democracy was arguably consolidated in the Philippines.

⁸⁷ 'Visit of Philippines' President Aquino', *US Department of State Bulletin*, (December) 1986. The Aquino administrations' national reconciliation program with the Communist New People's Army (NPA) included negotiations, proposals for a cease-fire/amnesty, as well as the release of Communist leaders from prison. In response, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage argued: 'The Communist insurgents have not changed and remain committed to armed struggle and a violent seizure of power.' See 'U.S. Worried by Rebel Gains in Philippines', *Reading Eagle*, 11/7/1986. The US pressured the Aquino government to adopt a more aggressive stance towards the NPA, removing Marcos-era restrictions on the delivery of 'lethal' military equipment, as part of a \$112 million military assistance budget in 1988, as well as increasing CIA personnel in Manila by 10%, and providing \$10 million for covert action/surveillance. See 'Testing Ground for Counterinsurgency', *Manila Standard*, 5/10/1987.

⁸⁸ Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, p. 140.

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Panama & Latin America

The success of the transitional template developed by the Reagan administration in the Philippines, led to the increased adoption of democracy promotion in US foreign policy. Latin America in particular was a prime target for this new strategy, given its location within the immediate sphere of US influence, and because of the popular pressures increasingly faced by authoritarian governments in the region. Chile, Nicaragua and Panama were all subject to the US strategy of democracy promotion. In Chile, following an extensive destabilisation campaign, the US supported General Pinochet's overthrow of the elected socialist President Allende in 1973. Positioned as a bulwark against Soviet influence in the region, Pinochet's rule was characterised by widespread violence and human rights abuses. He was also responsible for the rapid introduction of free market reforms, which Robert Looney notes: 'pioneered by Chile in the 1970s... these reforms spread throughout most of Latin America in the 1980s and to other parts of the developing world in the late 1980s and early 1990s.'⁸⁹ An immensely divisive figure both at home and abroad, the US withdrew support from Pinochet in 1985 in the face of rising domestic opposition, compounded by a lack of international legitimacy, and sought instead to facilitate a transition to elite-based democracy. The NED and USAID assumed a critical role in fostering an elite-led opposition movement, which culminated in the election of Patricio Aylwin in 1989.⁹⁰ In Nicaragua, the US supported the rule of the authoritarian Somoza dynasty for forty-three years. Following its overthrow by the left-wing Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in 1979, the US sought to destabilise the state, supporting the right-wing 'Contras' counter-revolutionaries amongst other tactics. After the electoral success of the Sandinistas in 1984, the US sought to create a viable elite-led opposition movement, whose disparate factions were integrated under the National Opposition Union (UNO) banner, to challenge the Sandinista government.⁹¹ This can

⁸⁹ Looney, R., 'The Neoliberal Model's Planned Role in Iraq's Economic Transition', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4, (Autumn) 2003, p. 571. These 'neoliberal' economic policies were devised by a group of Chilean economists known as the 'Chicago Boys', trained at the University of Chicago under Milton Friedman and Arnold Harberger. See Valdes, J. G., *Pinochet's Economists: The Chicago School of Economics in Chile*, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

⁹⁰ For a detailed overview of this process see 'Chile: Ironing out a "fluke of the political system"', in Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, pp. 146-200.

⁹¹ Kenneth Saltman argues that in 1989: 'the U.S. was pouring money into Nicaragua towards defeating the Sandinistas in the 1990 election... Election laws were circumvented by building up the National Opposition Union (UNO) with millions of dollars run through NED for "non-partisan" and "pro-democracy" programs, voter education, voter registration, job skill programs... The U.S. only funded the UNO out of eight political parties.' See Saltman, K., 'Creative Associates International:

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be seen as the creation of a counter-hegemonic bloc in Gramscian terms, with the purpose of confronting the Sandinistas' left-wing populist ideology. It eventually led to the election of the UNO candidate, Violeta Chamorro, in 1990.⁹²

The case of Panama is of particular interest. In contrast to the examples of Chile and Nicaragua, democracy promotion in Panama followed a military invasion by the US in 1989. As such it bears parallels with Iraq in 2003. US involvement in Panama dates to 1903, when it supported Panama's secession from Colombia, motivated by the desire to develop an isthmus joining the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.⁹³ The US military established an immediate presence in Panama, under the terms of the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, which granted 'in perpetuity... the use, occupation, and control' of the canal and the surrounding area, in which it gained 'all the rights, power, and authority... which the United States would possess and exercise if it were the sovereign.'⁹⁴ The US maintained a close involvement in Panamanian affairs, cultivating successive administrations dominated by the elite class, who largely acceded to US political, economic and military interests. In 1968 the National Guard assumed power under General Omar Torrijos, who was recognised and supported by the US, under the premise that authoritarian rule could suppress the forces of nationalism and particularly communism sweeping across the region. Torrijos' populist authoritarian stance positioned the military at the centre of a strengthened Panamanian state, which displayed an increasingly nationalist and anti-colonial assertiveness, achieved in part by stoking popular anti-US sentiment.⁹⁵ Following the death of Torrijos, General Manuel Noriega assumed power in 1983. A key US intelligence asset since the 1950s, he was initially welcomed by the US, cooperating with its efforts against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua for example. Using

Corporate Education and "Democracy Promotion" in Iraq', *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2006, p. 39.

⁹² For an in-depth analysis of this process see 'Nicaragua: From low-intensity warfare to low intensity democracy', in Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy*, pp. 201-255.

⁹³ The construction of the Panama Canal was crucial to the attainment of US dominance in the region, greatly enhancing its military and economic power. See Sánchez, P., *Panama Lost? U.S. Hegemony, Democracy, and the Canal*, University Press of Florida, 2007, p. 51.

⁹⁴ Meditz, S., Hanratty, D., (eds.), *Panama: A Country Study*, GPO for the Library of Congress, 1987. The privileges accorded to the US in the treaty proved highly contentious throughout US-Panamanian relations, provoking repeated, often violent anti-American demonstrations.

⁹⁵ On this basis Torrijos successfully negotiated a new canal treaty with President Jimmy Carter, which outlined its return to Panamanian sovereignty by 1999. The US acceded because of the reduced strategic value of the canal, but also so as to prevent a popular uprising. The US retained the right to intervene 'if the Canal is closed, or its operations are interfered with.' See Meditz, Hanratty, *Panama: A Country Study*.

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civilian figureheads to provide a veneer of legitimacy for his rule, Noriega came to dominate all aspects of Panamanian life, licit and illicit.⁹⁶ Following allegations of electoral fraud and murder, an active domestic opposition force emerged led by the elite class, which united professional, civic, business and labour organisations under the banner of the National Civic Crusade (CCN). Noriega's rule became increasingly repressive as a result, a trend which mirrored deteriorating relations with the US. While the US had created the National Guard, now renamed the Panamanian Defence Force (PDF), to ensure stability in Panama and US interests, it was increasingly seen as a source of instability.⁹⁷ In 1987 the Reagan administration initiated a series of economic and military sanctions, in response to growing domestic opposition and a government-sanctioned mob attack on the US Embassy. This was followed by Noriega's indictment on drug trafficking charges by a US court in 1988, which led to the freezing of Panamanian government assets in the US. Until this point US strategy had been to remove Noriega himself from power, rather than the PDF, which remained the dominant national institution. The strategy gradually changed however, as the US sought to engage with the opposition movement, and facilitate a transition from authoritarianism to elite-based democracy.

Elections were scheduled in Panama for May 1989. Through the NED and the CIA, the US provided more than \$10 million to the main opposition candidate, Guillermo Endara, who subsequently won the election according to most observers.⁹⁸ This prompted Noriega to annul the results and unleash a wave of repression. Former US President Jimmy Carter, leading an electoral observation team, announced that: 'the people of Panama are in the process of being defrauded of the votes they freely expressed.'⁹⁹ Attempts at mediation, conducted through the Organisation of

⁹⁶ The *New York Times* detailed Noriega's involvement in drug and arms trafficking, as well as money laundering. See Hersh, S., 'Panama Strongman Said to Trade in Drugs, Arms and Illicit Money', *New York Times*, 12/5/1986, at <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/06/12/world/panama-strongman-said-to-trade-in-drugs-arms-and-illicit-money.html>, accessed 16/8/2012. The US condoned widespread fraud in Panama's 1984 elections by recognising the military-backed government of Nicolás Ardito Barletta, who was also the US's preferred candidate. It funded the Barletta-affiliated Panamanian Confederation of Workers union through FTUI. See 'Free Trade Union Institute', Right Web, at http://rightweb.irc-online.org/articles/display/Free_Trade_Union_Institute, accessed 16/8/2012.

⁹⁷ Sánchez, *Panama Lost? U.S. Hegemony, Democracy, and the Canal*, p. 166.

⁹⁸ Crandall, R., *Gunboat Democracy: U.S. Interventions in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2006, p. 195.

⁹⁹ 'Transcript of May 8 Press Conference Where Carter Declared Panama Election a Fraud', *The May 7, 1989 Panamanian Elections: International Delegation Report*, National Republican Institute for International Affairs and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 1989, p. 80. This

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American States (OAS), failed and as a result the US sought to facilitate a transition by force. As in the case of the Philippines, once the transition became inevitable, the US sought to manage the process, with the aim of encouraging the emergence of a government more favourable to its interests. President G. H. W. Bush announced the invasion of Panama in December 1989:

My fellow citizens, last night I ordered U.S. military forces to Panama... For nearly two years, the United States, nations of Latin America and the Caribbean have worked together to resolve the crisis in Panama. The goals of the United States have been to safeguard the lives of Americans, to defend democracy in Panama, to combat drug trafficking, and to protect the integrity of the Panama Canal treaty.¹⁰⁰

As the invasion commenced, Endara was sworn in on a US military base, later stating that: ‘morally, patriotically, civically I had no other choice.’¹⁰¹ Peter Sánchez argues: ‘[the] invasion and the resulting occupation allowed Washington to achieve its key goals on the isthmus – remove General Noriega from power, eliminate the PDF as a political force on the isthmus, and install a pro-U.S. government.’¹⁰²

In the aftermath of the invasion, the US sought to consolidate its influence through operation ‘Promote Liberty’, with the express purpose of ‘restoring democracy’ to Panama. The aim was to stabilise both the Panamanian state and wider society, and complete the transition to elite-based democratic rule. At the time it was the largest single exercise in nation-building since Vietnam, involving an array of political, economic and military components.¹⁰³ First, the US sought to support the Endara administration through its term of office.¹⁰⁴ This included the use of psychological operations as ‘part of a grass roots campaign to build support for the Endara

raises important questions about the role of US-funded observers, participating in elections in which the US government has vested interests.

¹⁰⁰ Bush, G. H. W., ‘Address to the Nation on Panama’, 20/12/1989, at <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3422>, accessed 16/8/2012.

¹⁰¹ Martin, D., ‘Guillermo Endara, Who Helped Lead Panama From Noriega to Democracy, Dies at 73’, *New York Times*, 29/9/2009, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/30/world/americas/30endara.html>, accessed 15/8/2012.

¹⁰² Sánchez, *Panama Lost? U.S. Hegemony, Democracy, and the Canal*, p. 173.

¹⁰³ Crandall, *Gunboat Democracy*, p. 215.

¹⁰⁴ The widespread perception of Endara as an instrument of US policy was underscored when he was forced to call in US troops to quell a coup attempt in December 1990. See Harding, R., *Military Foundations of Panamanian Politics*, Transaction, 2001, p. 181, cited in Sánchez, *Panama Lost? U.S. Hegemony, Democracy, and the Canal*, p. 175.

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Government and U.S. actions.¹⁰⁵ As in the Philippines, emphasis was placed on the pillars of civil society: political parties and organisations, business and labour. To this end the NED funded a foundation affiliated with the elite-led CCN, which incorporated professional, civic, business and labour organisations, to ‘facilitate Panama’s transition to a fully democratic society.’¹⁰⁶ Other projects funded by the NED focused on strengthening political parties, in terms of their national leadership, organisation and communication capabilities.¹⁰⁷ In the run-up to the 1994 elections, NED aid increased rapidly, amounting to over \$250,000 in 1993 alone.¹⁰⁸ Second, US economic assistance initially came in the form of a \$1 billion aid package announced after the invasion. Continued economic support, a necessity due to the dire nature of the Panamanian economy, was made dependent on its gradual liberalisation, and in the context of the ‘war on drugs’, a measure of US scrutiny over the Panamanian banking system.¹⁰⁹ The economic reforms initiated by Endara were accelerated under his successor in 1994, Ernesto Pérez Balladares, who ‘implemented an economic reform program that included liberalization of the trade regime, privatization of state-owned enterprises, the institution of fiscal reform, and labor code reform.’¹¹⁰ Finally, in terms of the military, the US disbanded the PDF and replaced it with a national police force, the Public Forces of Panama. This was intended to preclude the re-emergence of a military government. The US also sought to renegotiate the Torrijos-Carter treaty, under which its forces were scheduled to withdraw from Panama in 1999, albeit unsuccessfully. Regardless, following the 1994 elections, elite-based democracy was in large part secured in Panama.

¹⁰⁵ See Conley, W., ‘Operations “Just Cause” and “Promote Liberty”’: The Implications of Military Operations’, US Marine Corps Command and Staff College MA thesis, 2001, p. 45.

¹⁰⁶ National Endowment for Democracy, ‘Annual Report - 1991’, p. 63.

¹⁰⁷ National Endowment for Democracy, ‘Annual Report - 1993’, p. 73.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Freed, K., ‘U.S. Insists That Panama Ease Banking Secrecy Laws: War On Drugs’, *Los Angeles Times*, 1/2/1990, at http://articles.latimes.com/1990-02-01/news/mn-1578_1_banking-secrecy-laws, accessed 16/8/2012.

¹¹⁰ Sullivan, M., ‘Panama: Political and Economic Conditions and U.S. Relations’, *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, 15/7/2009, p. 3.

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Conclusion

The formulation and implementation of the strategy of democracy promotion under the Reagan administration marks a watershed in US foreign policy. While the concept of democracy has been an abstract influence since the early twentieth century, it was only under Reagan that it was moulded into a coherent strategy and applied in an organised, systematic manner. In countries as diverse as the Philippines, Chile, Nicaragua and Panama, the monopoly on authoritarianism as the US's preferred system of government abroad was broken. This reflects a strategic shift from coercive to consensual mechanisms of social control, and specifically from supporting authoritarianism to elite-based democracies, the underlying aim remaining the maintenance of the stability of state and society. Weaving the traditional strands of US foreign policy – political, military, economic – with emerging fields such as public diplomacy, in support of its liberal democratic ideology, the strategy of democracy promotion has assumed a crucial role in the US's pursuit of hegemony. As a result of the Reagan administration's innovative efforts to position 'democracy' as a central tenet of US policy, most subsequent administrations have continued to support its expansion abroad, in what can be seen as an ongoing, long-term transition in US foreign policy. The following chapters examine this process in the Middle East, and specifically in Egypt, Iraq and Egypt.

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‘Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe – because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export. And with the spread of weapons that can bring catastrophic harm to our country and to our friends, it would be reckless to accept the status quo.

Therefore, the United States has adopted a new policy, a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East. This strategy requires the same persistence and energy and idealism we have shown before. And it will yield the same results. As in Europe, as in Asia, as in every region of the world, the advance of freedom leads to peace.’¹

– *President George W. Bush*

Introduction

The US has assumed a dominant role in the Middle East since the end of the Second World War. Motivated in main by the presence of abundant oil reserves and a key ally in the State of Israel, the US has long regarded the Middle East region as a vital sphere of interest, second perhaps only to Latin America. As was the case there, the US sought to extend its influence in the Middle East by cultivating relationships with authoritarian governments, such as Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. This was driven by the belief that authoritarian systems of government could best ensure stability and accordingly US interests. The promotion of democracy therefore did not feature in any significant measure in US Middle East policy for the greater part of its involvement in the region. This began to change under the Clinton administration, which emphasised economic reform as a prelude to political reform. Then under the G. W. Bush administration, following the events of September 11, 2001, democratisation in the Middle East emerged as an explicit aim of US policy with unprecedented emphasis.

¹ Bush, G. W., ‘Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy’, 6/11/2003, at <http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary>, accessed 17/12/2012.

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This chapter will examine the formulation and implementation of the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East under the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations. It will trace the contours of an ongoing transition in US policy to the Middle East, a gradual shift in emphasis from supporting coercive authoritarian governments, to encouraging the emergence of more consensual elite-based democracies. First it will place democracy promotion within the wider US policy context, accounting for the US's core interests, and principal determinants of its policy in the region: Western access to oil and the security of Israel. It will then analyse the US's cooperation with authoritarian governments in the Middle East, seeking to explain the premises behind these longstanding relationships. The chapter will then address the respective approaches of the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations to political, economic, social and cultural reform in the Middle East, in an examination of the strategy of democracy promotion on a regional level.

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US Policy in the Middle East: The Principal Determinants

The Middle East has been a focus of US policy since the end of the Second World War, when the US began to gradually supplant Britain as the dominant Western power in the region. Its ascendant role was consolidated in the aftermath of the Suez Canal Crisis of 1956, which confirmed the decline of British and French influence, and left the US to assume primary responsibility for maintaining Western influence in the region.² The Middle East has since evolved into a permanent American geopolitical interest of paramount importance. In recent decades US policy in the region has been determined broadly by the following objectives: maintaining secure access to oil, Israel's security and regional stability, countering terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and promoting political and economic reform.³ Two of these, access to oil and the security of Israel, predominate. Most of the US's strategic concerns in the region derive at least partly from these interests, as for example the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. The strategy of democracy promotion is no exception, given that it in essence it constitutes an attempt to ensure the continuity of US influence and interests in the region.

The presence of oil in the Middle East has been a principal determinant of US policy. US commercial involvement in the Middle East dates to the Red Line Agreement of 1928, although Michael Hudson notes that the US did not regard oil in terms of a strategic value until the Second World War, when it recognised its potential 'not only for prosecuting... [the war] but also as a cheap supplement to declining US reserves, and the West's oil-driven post-war economic development.'⁴ This was reflected in a State Department memorandum written in 1945, which describes Saudi Arabian oil alone as a 'stupendous source of strategic power and one of the greatest material prizes in world history.'⁵ This recognition, more than any other factor, has determined the overriding interest the US has developed in the Middle East.

² France retained a physical presence in the region until Algeria's independence in 1962, while Britain did so until it formally withdrew from Bahrain in 1971.

³ Pelletreau, R., 'American Objectives in the Middle East', US-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee, Occasional Paper Series No. 7, 1996, pp. 2-3.

⁴ Hudson, M., 'The United States in the Middle East', in Fawcett, L., (ed.), *International Relations of the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 288. Under the Red Line agreement, the major international oil companies pledged to proportionally divide future oil discovered in the region.

⁵ 'Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs', *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, Vol. VIII, 1945, p. 45, cited in Curtis, M., *The Ambiguities of Power*, Zed Books, 1995, p. 21.

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Therefore while in 1945 the region produced approximately ten percent of the world's oil, by 1960 this figure had increased to twenty-five per cent, with the US importing approximately half of its total oil needs from the Middle East by the 1970's.⁶ As Peter Odell argues: 'The economies of western European countries and of many countries in other parts of the world [thus] became dependent upon Middle East oil resources.'⁷ President G. W. Bush acknowledged this dependency in 2006, explicitly stating that: 'America is addicted to oil.'⁸ The fact that the majority of the world's remaining conventional oil reserves are located in the Middle East, means that the status of oil as a vital US regional interest is unlikely to change in the near future.⁹ Martin Indyk argues that: 'as long as... [Western] economies depend on oil, they will depend on the free flow of oil from the Gulf at reasonable prices; and the United States, as the leading world economy and the most powerful nation, has a responsibility to protect this vital interest.'¹⁰ Nonetheless while Western access to oil clearly constitutes a principal determinant of US policy to the Middle East, there is a popular inclination to regard it as an exclusive one. Such arguments are overly simplistic, given the diverse range of interests US policy in the region has to take into account over any given period. The immediate impact of oil on US policy has also been reduced by initiatives such as the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and the diversification of import sources. President G. W. Bush himself outlined an ambitious plan to reduce imports from the Middle East by seventy-five per cent by 2025, in order to 'make our dependence on Middle Eastern oil a thing of the past.'¹¹

The other principal determinant of US policy in the Middle East is its relationship with Israel. This predates the formation of the Israeli state in 1948, itself made possible in large part through American support. The US-Israeli 'special relationship' has established itself since the 1960s as a unique bilateral bond, incorporating political, economic, military and cultural ties, as well as shared geostrategic interests, as for example the curtailment of the Iranian nuclear programme. Politically, the US

⁶ Odell, P., 'The Significance of Oil', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (July) 1968, p. 96.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Bush, G. W., 'State of the Union Address', 31/1/2006, at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/stateoftheunion/2006/>, accessed 17/8/2012.

⁹ 'Peak Oil Review', *Association for the Study of Peak Oil & Gas - USA Newsletter*, 20/2/2006.

¹⁰ Indyk, M., 'US Policy Priorities in the Gulf: Challenges and Choices', in *International Interests in the Gulf Region*, The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies & Research, 2004, p. 104.

¹¹ Bush, 'State of the Union Address'.

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extends staunch support to Israel, reflected in its consistent vetoing of UN resolutions deemed to be critical of it.¹² This is indicative of a broader support amongst the general US public, which is largely sympathetic to Israel on the basis of ideological considerations. These stem from Israel's perceived status as the only democratic, Western-oriented state in the Middle East, and therefore an important US ally. This support has been cultivated by movements such as the Christian Right and the pro-Israel lobby, the latter having been extremely successful in promoting Israeli interests in the US.¹³ Economically, as a Congressional Research Service report notes: 'Since 1976, Israel has been the largest annual recipient of US foreign assistance, and is the largest cumulative recipient since World War II.'¹⁴ John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt observe that: 'Israel receives about \$3 billion in direct foreign assistance each year, which is roughly one fifth of America's foreign aid budget.'¹⁵ Finally, the US-Israeli military relationship has been an integral aspect of the bilateral bond, in particular since 1967 when, in the aftermath of the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War, the US became Israel's principal military supplier. The relationship has expanded over the years to include joint military exercises, weapons research and development, intelligence cooperation, and mutual exchanges of military personnel. The above evidence the 'special' nature of the US-Israeli relationship. But as with arguments positioning oil as an exclusive determinant, there is an inclination to overemphasise Israel's influence on US foreign policy, particularly in terms of the pro-Israel lobby. While significant influence is clearly exerted, foreign policy is determined according to the perceived national interests of the US itself. Contrary to popular belief, the US does not always pursue policies favourable to Israel, and has on occasion challenged the Israeli state. One example was President G. H. W. Bush's opposition to US loan guarantees for Israel in 1991, due to continued settlement in the Palestinian Territories. Another was President G. W. Bush's call for the creation of an independent Palestinian state in 2003, the first time a US President did so publicly.

¹² See 'U.S. Vetoes of UN Resolutions Critical of Israel', at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/UN/usvetoes.html>, accessed 6/12/2010.

¹³ See Mearsheimer, J., Walt, S., *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Penguin, 2008.

¹⁴ Mark, C., 'Summary', in 'Israel: U.S. Foreign Assistance', *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, 3/10/2003.

¹⁵ Mearsheimer, J., Walt, S., *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (March) 2006, p. 2, at <http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/A0040.pdf>, accessed 17/8/2012.

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US Policy in the Middle East: The Support of Authoritarianism

As seen previously, the strategy of democracy promotion was first introduced in a systematic manner by the Reagan administration in the Philippines in the early 1980s. Under Reagan and his successor George H. W. Bush, this strategy was gradually extended into Chile, Nicaragua and Panama. During the 1990s it was also true, albeit to a lesser extent, of the post-Soviet republics – for example Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan – which also became targets of US democracy promotion. In contrast the Arab Middle Eastern states were largely excluded from this nascent emphasis on political reform, despite the US's longstanding, entrenched presence in the region. With the tacit support of the US, authoritarian rule has evolved into a staple of contemporary Middle East politics, defying the tangible trend of democratisation across the world in the latter part of the twentieth century.¹⁶

Authoritarian governance in the Middle East is notable both for its prevalence and longevity. The Arab Human Development Report of 2002 noted: 'The wave of democracy that transformed governance in most of Latin America and East Asia in the 1980s and Eastern Europe and much of Central Asia in the late 1980s and early 1990s has barely reached the Arab States.'¹⁷ Richard Norton lists 'Israel, Turkey and, less compellingly, Kuwait and Lebanon' as exceptions to this rule.¹⁸ Nonetheless, both the Israeli and Turkish states' stances towards their respective Arab and Kurdish minorities indicate that their democratic systems remain at best incomplete, while Kuwait and Lebanon can only be described as undergoing the early stages of a process of democratisation. At any rate Norton makes an important observation when he states that: 'the exceptional cases of Israel and Turkey entail predominantly non-Arab societies, [therefore] it is clear that the democracy deficit applies significantly to the Arab world.'¹⁹ This 'democratic deficit' cannot be attributed to a single variable, be it political, economic, social or cultural. The explanation lies rather in a combination of these factors, alongside longstanding external support for

¹⁶ According to Freedom House, 39 out of 141 states were electoral democracies in 1974 (28%). In 2001 this figure had risen to 121 out of 192 states (63%). See *Foreign Aid in the National Interest: Promoting Freedom, Security, and Opportunity*, USAID Report, 2002, p. 7.

¹⁷ *Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*, United Nations Development Programme, 2002, p. 2.

¹⁸ Norton, A. R., 'The Puzzle of Political Reform in the Middle East', in Fawcett, *International Relations of the Middle East*, p. 132.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

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authoritarian rule, and the various Arab governments' own determination to preserve their hold on power. Anthony Cordesman alludes to this when he claims that: 'many Middle Eastern states have no enemy greater than their own governments.'²⁰ It is nonetheless important to note that the degree of authoritarianism is not uniform across the region, rather it is subject to considerable variance from state to state. Daniel Brumberg distinguishes between 'total' autocracies, for example Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran, and 'partial' autocracies, for instance Morocco, Egypt, and Kuwait, claiming that the former is the 'exception rather than the rule in the Arab world.'²¹ He accurately observes that:

liberalized autocracy has proven far more durable than once imagined. The trademark mixture of guided pluralism, controlled elections, and selective repression in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, and Kuwait is not just a 'survival strategy' adopted by authoritarian regimes, but rather a type of political system whose institutions, rules, and logic defy any linear model of democratisation.²²

This clearly poses a significant challenge to US attempts to promote democracy in the Middle East, and achieve hegemony in the long-term.

The US's longstanding support of authoritarian governments in the Middle East has been based on several premises. First and foremost is the fact that authoritarian proxies have been effective in facilitating US interests in the region, particularly during the Cold War. The overriding US interest in the Middle East during this period, as elsewhere, was its strategic value in the US-Soviet conflict.²³ Larbi Sadiki argues that: 'the Cold war fostered a political culture in world politics whereby membership in the former Soviet or American camps qualified client regimes for

²⁰ Cordesman, A., 'Transitions in the Middle East: An Address to the 8th U.S. Mideast Policymakers Conference', 9/9/1999, at [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/me_transitions\[1\].pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/me_transitions[1].pdf), accessed 3/7/2010.

²¹ Brumberg, D., 'The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy', *Journal of Democracy*, (October) 2002, p. 61.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²³ David, S., 'The Continuing Importance of American Interests in the Middle East after the Cold War', in Sheffer, G., (ed.), *U.S.-Israeli Relations at the Crossroads*, Frank Cass and Co, 1997, p. 94. For instance even the development of the US's relationship with Israel can be partly attributed to the recognition, as early as the Eisenhower administration, of Israel's potential to act as a 'bulwark' against the spread of Soviet Communism in the region. See Safran, N., *Israel the Embattled Ally*, Harvard University Press, 1978, p. 360.

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unfettered assistance, often in disregard of their appalling human rights violations, autocratic politics and mismanagement of resources.’²⁴ The US’s stance was exemplified by the Kirkpatrick doctrine, introduced under the Reagan administration.²⁵ Jeane Kirkpatrick distinguished between ‘authoritarian’ and ‘totalitarian’ governments, rationalising US support for the former when opposing communism, given that they permitted a modicum of civil freedoms and socio-political diversity, and were therefore capable of gradual reform.²⁶ Yet despite the end of the Cold War in 1991, the US has continued to support authoritarian rule in the region; longstanding proxies include Saudi Arabia and Jordan. This continuity has been motivated primarily by the aim of maintaining stability in the near-term, given the potential impact of instability on core US regional interests. This was illustrated during the first Gulf War in 1991, with the US leading a coalition against Iraq after its attempted annexation of Kuwait. President G. H. W. Bush called for ‘the restoration of Kuwait’s *legitimate government* to replace the puppet regime installed by Iraq’ (emphasis added).²⁷ Ultimately the US ensured the continuity of the Kuwaiti monarchy, and by extension that of neighbouring Saudi Arabia.²⁸ Steve Smith wryly observes that: ‘The US may well have been justified in its policies towards Saddam Hussein... but there was a certain paradox about US forces physically protecting and supporting some of the richest and most undemocratic regimes in the world.’²⁹

A second premise behind the US’s sustenance of authoritarianism has been the influence of arguments of Middle Eastern ‘exceptionalism’. These have sought to explain the prevalence of authoritarianism, and the perceived resistance to Western political, economic, social and cultural values, by focusing on aspects of the region’s political culture; these include ‘Islam, “Oriental despotism”, patrimonialism,

²⁴ Sadiki, L., *The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses*, Hurst, 2004, p. 347.

²⁵ See Kirkpatrick, J., *Dictatorships and Double Standards: A Critique of U.S. Policy*, Georgetown University Press, 1978.

²⁶ Parker, J., ‘Authoritarianism’, in Van Dijk, R., (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Cold War*, Routledge, 2008, p. 53.

²⁷ NSC, ‘U.S. Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait, NSD 45, 20/8/1990, at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB39/document2.pdf>, accessed 17/8/2012.

²⁸ This is discussed further in Chapter Six.

²⁹ Smith, S., ‘US Democracy Promotion: Critical Questions’, in Cox, M., Ikenberry, J., Inoguchi, T., (eds.), *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 65.

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patriarchalism, “small group politics” and mass passivity.’³⁰ Elie Kedourie’s statement that: ‘the idea of democracy is quite alien to the mind-set of Islam’ is one notable example.³¹ Such claims of exceptionalism have long contributed to the perception of a troubled region, set apart from the rest of the world and immune to its trends and influences. This reduced the onus on the US as the predominant power in the region to act as a catalyst for reform, somewhat excusing its support of the authoritarian status quo. Nonetheless claims of exceptionalism are largely redundant, particularly when reference is made to a monolithic, static Arabo-Islamic political culture. As Raymond Hinnebusch observes: ‘most analysts insist that Islam varies too widely by context and time to constitute an unchanging religious obstacle to democratization.’³² Furthermore Lisa Anderson argues that: ‘the repeated demands for human rights, political liberalization, and democratic government in the Arab world in the 1980s and 1990s – demands that actually yielded contested parliamentary elections in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen – belie uniform hostility to democracy.’³³ Yet consecutive American administrations have been influenced by such arguments. It was therefore a significant statement when in 2004, President G. W. Bush explicitly rejected the prevailing notion of Middle Eastern exceptionalism. He claimed:

We also hear doubts that democracy is a realistic goal for the greater Middle East, where freedom is rare. Yet it is mistaken, and condescending, to assume that whole cultures and great religions are incompatible with liberty and self-government. I believe that God has planted in every heart the desire to live in freedom. And even when that desire is crushed by tyranny for decades, it will rise again.³⁴

This argument in favour of a universalist interpretation of democracy marks an important threshold for the US strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East.

³⁰ Hinnebusch, R., ‘Authoritarian Persistence, Democratization Theory and the Middle East: An Overview and Critique’, *Democratization*, Vol. 13, No. 3, (June) 2006, p. 375.

³¹ Kedourie, E., *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992, p. 1.

³² Hinnebusch, ‘Authoritarian Persistence, Democratization Theory and the Middle East’, p. 375.

³³ Anderson, L., ‘Arab Democracy: Dismal Prospects’, *World Policy Journal*, Vol. XVIII, No. 3, (Fall) 2001, p. 54.

³⁴ Bush, G. W., ‘State of the Union Address’, 20/1/2004, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/transcripts/bushtext_012004.html, accessed 18/8/2012.

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A third, final premise behind the US's support of authoritarian governance has been the emergence of political Islam as a force. As the main political opposition in the Middle East, and one that has come to power recently in Tunisia and Egypt, Islamists have stood to gain the most from reform, at least over the short-term. This is partly due to the nature of authoritarian rule, which invariably limits the political 'spaces' available, with religion affording one such space in the context of Middle Eastern societies. This has benefited Islamist movements, since as Jason Brownlee notes in the case of Egypt: 'a competitive multiparty system would... reduce, rather than increase, Islamist representation in parliament by offering anti-NDP [National Democratic Party] voters alternatives to the Muslim Brotherhood.'³⁵ A significant part of Islamists' political platforms is based on anti-American and anti-Western rhetoric, an influence which emanates from the so-called Occidentalism paradigm.³⁶ This broadly, although by no means exclusively, entails a rejection of the liberal democratic model promoted by the US, as well as opposition to the introduction of Western political, economic, social and cultural values.³⁷ As such these parties pose a considerable challenge to US efforts to extend its hegemony in the region, given their potential to serve as a counter-hegemonic bloc. Adam Shatz argues:

Since the collapse of Nasserism in 1967, Islamism has provided the Arabs with an idiom of resistance, one with an even stronger claim to cultural authenticity than secular nationalism. The lustre of Islamism has also been burnished by concrete achievements: the success of the AKP in Turkey and Erdogan's growing stature as a regional leader who has defied American wishes; the 2006 'divine victory' of Hizbullah in Lebanon, which washed away some of the humiliation the Arabs have felt since the 1967 defeat.³⁸

Islamism therefore appears as one of the few ideological alternatives to that promoted by the US, both in the Middle East and beyond.

³⁵ Brownlee, J., 'The Decline of Pluralism in Mubarak's Egypt', in Diamond, L., Plattner, M., Brumberg, D., (eds.), *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, John Hopkins University Press, 2003, p. 54.

³⁶ See Buruma, I., Margalit, A., *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*, Penguin Press, 2004.

³⁷ This is discussed in Chapter One; See also Wickham, C., 'The Problem with Coercive Democratization: The Islamist Response to the U.S. Democracy Reform Initiative', *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, 2004.

³⁸ Shatz, A., 'Whose Egypt?', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 5/1/2012, at <http://www.lrb.co.uk/2011/12/20/adam-shatz/whose-egypt>, accessed 18/2/2012.

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This has resulted in the so-called ‘Islamist dilemma’, the fear that by encouraging democratic transitions in the Middle East, US policy-makers will facilitate the rise to power of parties intrinsically opposed to its ideology and interests. Robert Pelletreau, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs under Clinton, claimed: ‘We’re suspicious of those who would use the democratic process to come to power only to destroy that process in order to retain power and political dominance.’³⁹ The precedent for this dilemma was established by the Algerian elections of 1992. As a result of political liberalisation measures initiated by the ruling National Liberation Front, the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to assume a majority in the National Assembly. So as to pre-empt this, the Algerian military seized power. This led to a vicious, protracted civil war that claimed over 150,000 lives.⁴⁰ Manifestations of this dilemma appeared in the Egyptian parliamentary elections in 2005, and the Palestinian Territories’ legislative elections in 2006. Both came amidst demands by the G. W. Bush administration for political reform in the Middle East. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood won an estimated nineteen per cent of seats, in part because US pressure prevented the widespread fraud and manipulation characteristic of most previous elections. After this, the US’s enthusiasm for expedited political reform in Egypt waned notably. In the Palestinian Territories, elections were a precondition for US engagement and its support for a future Palestinian state. This culminated in the election of Hamas, an Islamist group classified as a terrorist organisation by both the US and the European Union (EU). The US and the other Quartet powers – the United Nations (UN), the EU and Russia – subsequently refused to recognise Hamas as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, as it failed to accept the conditions demanded of it, namely to ‘recognise Israel’s right to exist, forswear violence and accept previous Palestinian-Israeli agreements.’⁴¹ Following a forcible takeover of Gaza by Hamas in June 2007, the Quartet imposed economic sanctions on the Palestinian enclave; these were eventually superseded by an Israeli blockade. At the same time the US rapidly increased funding for the Fatah-controlled West

³⁹ Pelletreau, R., cited in Gerges, F., *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 102.

⁴⁰ See ‘Algeria Profile’, *BBC News*, 4/9/2012, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14118852>, accessed 18/10/2012.

⁴¹ Erlanger, S., ‘U.S. and Israelis Are Said to Talk of Hamas Ouster’, *New York Times*, 14/2/2006, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/14/international/middleeast/14mideast.html?pagewanted=all>, accessed 18/8/2012. The Quartet on the Middle East was established in 2002, to facilitate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

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Bank, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, whose candidacies for prime minister in 2003 and president in 2005 it had supported. Jim Zanotti notes:

The United States has appropriated or reprogrammed nearly \$2 billion since 2007 in support of PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's security, governance, development, and reform programs, including \$650 million for direct budgetary assistance to the PA and nearly \$400 million...for strengthening and reforming PA security forces and criminal justice systems in the West Bank.⁴²

The US's intention was clearly to undermine the Islamist Hamas movement, and conversely strengthen the secular Fatah party. The above demonstrate that it is only where conditions for political reform have been deemed viable that the US has promoted transitions to elite-based democracy. Alternatively authoritarian proxies have been maintained. This assessment of viability is contingent largely on the prospects of the US's preferred candidates assuming power through the ballot box.

⁴² Zanotti, J., 'Summary', in 'U.S. Foreign Aid to the Palestinians', *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, 12/8/2010.

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US Policy in the Middle East: The Strategy of Democracy Promotion

The end of the Cold War heralded the dawn of a radically different era for the US, which was confronted with the challenge of defining its position in the newly unipolar international system. Given that the ideological fusion of democracy and capitalism was credited in large part with defeating communism and the state-planned economic model, it was perhaps inevitable that the promotion of democracy and free markets would emerge as an increasingly important theme of US foreign policy. This clearly had significant implications for the Middle East, given the extent of the US's involvement in the region, its vital ongoing interests there, and the conspicuous dearth of Arab democratic governance. US policy in the Middle East, since the Clinton administration in particular, has been increasingly based on the premise that democratisation, in conjunction with free market reforms, can usher in a new era of regional stability, and in the process ensure US interests. The G. W. Bush administration adopted a more belligerent stance in the region, as a result of the events of September 11, but one that nonetheless drew heavily, and indeed more overtly, on these same premises of reform. It is therefore possible to identify the outlines of a gradual, ongoing shift in US policy to the Middle East, one that shares many common characteristics with the US's prior experiences in Latin America. As was the case in Chile and Panama for example, the US has sought to gradually facilitate the conditions for an eventual transfer of support away from authoritarian political systems to elite-based democracies.⁴³ This reflects a strategic shift in US policy, from reliance on coercive to consensual systems of governance, the underlying aim remaining the maintenance of stability, and eventually the achievement of hegemony. The implementation of this strategy is still underway in the Middle East, with progress in the early stages, but it is possible to trace the contours of this ongoing transition.

⁴³ See Chapter Two.

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The Clinton Administration: Promoting Free Markets in the Middle East

The roots of the contemporary US strategy of democracy promotion lie in its efforts to encourage economic reform and integration in the broader Middle East region in the 1980s. Intended as a means of ensuring stability, as Michele Dunne argues: [it was through] its push for economic reform, [that] the United States established the principle that Washington could and should engage with Arab governments about their internal affairs.⁴⁴ The Clinton administration's approach to the Middle East exemplified this emphasis on economic affairs, a reflection of the central role accorded to the economy in both its domestic and foreign policies. Indeed the National Security Strategy of 1995 was premised on the belief that:

the line between our domestic and foreign policies is disappearing – that we must revitalize our economy if we are to sustain our military forces, foreign initiatives and global influence, and that we must engage actively abroad if we are to open foreign markets and create jobs for our people. We believe that our goals of enhancing our security, bolstering our economic prosperity, and promoting democracy are mutually supportive.⁴⁵

It was logical therefore that the Clinton administration's approach to the Middle East also reflected its wider foreign policy theme of 'democratic enlargement'. In the absence of the Cold War rivalry, the Administration had initially struggled to coherently define a novel approach to America's foreign relations, before eventually settling on the concept of democratic enlargement.⁴⁶ Anthony Lake, Clinton's National Security Adviser, announced that: 'the successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement – enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies.'⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Dunne, M., 'Integrating Democracy Promotion into U.S. Middle East Policy', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 50, (October) 2004, p. 3.

⁴⁵ NSC, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (February) 1995, p. i.

⁴⁶ Douglas Brinkley provides a sound overview of the process that led to the adoption of the theme of democratic enlargement. See Brinkley, D., 'Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine', *Foreign Policy*, No. 106, (Spring) 1997.

⁴⁷ Lake identified the strategy's main components as follows: 'First, we should strengthen the community of major market democracies... Second, we should help foster and consolidate new democracies and market economies, where possible... Third, we must counter the aggression – and support the liberalization – of states hostile to democracy and markets. Fourth, we need to pursue our humanitarian agenda not only by providing aid, but also by working to help democracy and market economics take root in regions of greatest humanitarian concern.' See Lake, A., 'From Containment to

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Demonstrating a belief in the intrinsic relationship between liberal democracy and capitalism, with the former predicated on the latter, the term ‘market democracy’ was used by the Clinton administration to encapsulate its vision for the unipolar international system. It subsequently adopted a vigorously pro-democratic rhetorical framework, positioning democracy promotion ‘as the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy.’⁴⁸ Moreover, it presided over a vast augmentation of the ‘infrastructure of democracy’ introduced under Reagan. Thomas Carothers argues that:

The most substantial element of this process of institutionalization... [was] the large growth in aid for democracy-assistance programs explicitly designed to foster or bolster democratic institutions and processes. The current wave of U.S. democracy aid began under Reagan but multiplied exponentially under Clinton, from around \$100 million annually ten years ago to more than \$700 million [in 2000].⁴⁹

Many of these programs reflected ‘the Clinton administration’s sudden, urgent enthusiasm about civil society and its promotion.’⁵⁰ This demonstrates the continuity of the strategy of democracy promotion, with the foreign policy visions articulated by Reagan and Clinton, commonly seen as polar opposites within the spectrum of American domestic politics, in fact differing little in essence. As Strobe Talbott, Clinton’s Deputy Secretary of State, claimed in a speech that could have easily referred to Reagan: ‘President Clinton believes that our generation has an historic opportunity to shape our world. He believes that since it is, above all, the triumph of democracy and markets that has brought us victory in the Cold War, it must be, above all, the defense of democracy and markets that should guide us now.’⁵¹

Enlargement’, Speech at Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., 21/9/1993, at <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/lakedoc.html>, accessed 18/8/2012.

⁴⁸ Carothers, T., ‘Examining the Clinton Record on Democracy Promotion’, Carnegie Endowment Symposium, 12/9/2000, at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/index.cfm?fa=eventDetail&id=197&&proj=zdr1>, accessed 7/7/2010. Carothers claims that: ‘As a presidential candidate in 1992, Bill Clinton made democracy promotion the organizing concept of his proposed foreign policy. Throughout his presidency he and his top advisers... returned to the theme again and again.’ See Carothers, T., ‘The Clinton Record on Democracy Promotion’, *Carnegie Working Papers*, No. 16, (September) 2000, p. 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵¹ Talbott, S., ‘Cyril Foster Lecture’, Oxford University, U.K., 20/10/1994, cited in Carothers, ‘The Clinton Record on Democracy Promotion’, p. 12.

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The Clinton administration's primary focus in the Middle East was the Arab-Israeli peace process. This was because of the conflicts' impact on its core interests, regional stability and the global economy. Pelletreau articulated the Administration's rationale:

The United States is engaged on several fronts to advance peace negotiations, an engagement which in turn helps achieve our other objectives in the Middle East. These include preserving Israel's security and well-being; maintaining security arrangements to preserve stability in the Persian Gulf and commercial access to its resources; combating terrorism and weapons proliferation; assisting U.S. businesses, and promoting political and economic reform.⁵²

Clinton launched a series of complementary diplomatic and economic initiatives, seeking to resolve the conflict and bring a measure of stability to the region. Primarily this entailed facilitating negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), as well as with key regional actors such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Clinton's diplomatic track was relatively successful, particularly in light of the measured expectations. It led to the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, and to the normalization of relations between Israel and Jordan in 1994, only the second Arab state after Egypt to do so. These events augured hope for a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and as a result the Administration sought to foster regional economic liberalization and integration, as a means of consolidating the ongoing peace process. Secretary of State Warren Christopher stated that the Administration's mission was to:

transform the peace being made between governments into a peace between peoples. Governments can make the peace. Governments can create the climate for economic growth. But only the people of the private sector can marshal [sic] the resources necessary for sustained growth and development. Only the private sector can produce a peace that will endure.⁵³

⁵² Pelletreau, 'American Objectives in the Middle East', pp. 2-3.

⁵³ Christopher, W., MENA conference in Casablanca, Morocco, 30/10-1/11 1994, cited in Momani, B., 'A Middle East Free Trade Area: Economic Interdependence and Peace Considered', *World Economy*, Vol. 30, Issue 11, 2007, p. 1683.

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The Clinton administration subsequently unleashed a raft of regional economic initiatives, including the US-Egypt Partnership for Economic Growth of 1994, the amendment of the US-Israel Free Trade Agreement to incorporate the West Bank, Gaza and ‘Qualifying Industrial Zones’ in Jordan in 1996, the US-North Africa Economic Partnership in 1998, as well as a historic Free Trade Agreement with Jordan in 2000.⁵⁴ As Bessma Momani argues: ‘The Clinton administration was slowly enticing peace partners into a vision for regional economic integration, hoping that this would achieve American strategic interests in the Middle East.’⁵⁵

While a permanent resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict ultimately eluded Clinton, the above measures reflect the prevalent emphasis on economic reform under his administration. It has been argued that the Clinton administration’s emphasis on democracy promotion was largely superficial in the case of the Middle East.⁵⁶ To an extent this is true, no serious attempt was made to aggressively pursue rapid democratisation in Mubarak’s Egypt for example. This was for several main reasons. First, the fear of destabilising Middle Eastern states, many of them key allies, and in particular provoking any repetition of the aforementioned ‘Algerian scenario’ of 1992. Second, the Clinton administration was concerned that by adopting a harsh line on political reform, it would disrupt its efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Dunne claims: ‘The general attitude in the U.S. State Department and the White House at the time was that it was easier to cut deals with autocratic rulers than with unpredictable parliaments and electorates. Officials also believed that the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict prevented Arab peoples and regimes from focusing on domestic reform.’⁵⁷ But the Clinton administration’s emphasis on promoting economic initiatives in the region, underscored by the perception of an intrinsic link between free market reforms and democratisation, amidst its focus on strengthening Arab civil societies and a broader augmentation of the democracy promotion

⁵⁴ Dunne, ‘Integrating Democracy Promotion into U.S. Middle East Policy’, p. 4. The Administration also proposed the creation of a regional ‘MENABANK’, which Dalia Dassa Kaye notes was intended to ‘serve the political objectives of the peace process, creating cooperative outlets for Arab-Israeli interaction that would establish a favorable regional climate for peacemaking’, as well as a Regional Business Council, which would encourage intra-regional trade through the private sector. Both of the proposals were ultimately unsuccessful. See Dassa Kaye, D., ‘Banking on Peace: Lessons from the Middle East Development Bank’, *IGCC Policy Paper*, No. 43, 1998, p. 4; Momani, ‘A Middle East Free Trade Area’, p. 1684.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ See for instance Carothers, ‘The Clinton Record on Democracy Promotion’, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Dunne, ‘Integrating Democracy Promotion into U.S. Middle East Policy’, p. 4.

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‘infrastructure’, indicates that political reform in the Middle East was on the agenda, albeit tacitly. The Administration’s underlying assumption was that economic reforms would consolidate peace and then lead to political reforms. As Douglas Brinkley argues: ‘The vision of democratic enlargement was econocentric: Only countries with free-spending middle classes, it was believed, could become democratic and adopt the Western values of embracing ethnic diversity, protecting citizens’ rights, and cooperating with the world community to stop terrorism.’⁵⁸ The Clinton administration was seeking to facilitate the conditions for a gradual, incremental transition to democracy, through an emphasis on economic reform and strengthening civil society, as preconditions of political reform. Clearly this varied from country to country, while this was true of the Administration’s policy in Egypt for example, it was not the case in Saudi Arabia. Clinton’s approach in the Middle East can be compared with earlier US policies in Latin America, which in many ways have served as the template for the contemporary strategy of democracy promotion, and where the advocacy of free market reforms either preceded or coincided with US efforts to facilitate political reform. In Chile for example, neoliberal market reforms were introduced under the authoritarian Pinochet government with direct US assistance during the 1970s. Yet when Pinochet began to face intensifying popular opposition in the 1980s, the US supported a transition to elite-based democracy.⁵⁹ The Clinton administration’s promotion of economic reform in the Middle East, a precursor to the G. W. Bush administration’s more direct emphasis on political reform, can therefore be seen as contributing to the strategy of democracy promotion and the pursuit of hegemony, which ultimately involves the internationalisation of the promoted ideology, in this case a fusion of liberal democratic political norms and free market economic values.

⁵⁸ Brinkley, ‘Democratic Enlargement’, p. 118.

⁵⁹ This is discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

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The G. W. Bush Administration: Promoting Democracy in the Middle East

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, initiated a significant departure in the traditional direction of US policy to the Middle East. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the US was able to clearly define its position in the international system, in part by replacing the ‘other’ of Soviet totalitarianism with that of Islamic fundamentalism, as it embarked on a ‘global war on terror’. The G. W. Bush administration’s perception of the Middle East’s ‘democratic deficit’ as the underlying cause of the events of September 11, ensured that democracy promotion emerged with unprecedented exigency as a central tenet of US policy to the Middle East.⁶⁰ It was pursued through a range of political, economic and military measures. These can be divided into four broad, yet mutually constitutive categories: diplomacy, regional policy initiatives, economic engagement and military intervention – combined these formed the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East under the G. W. Bush administration.

The first category consisted of traditional and public diplomacy. In terms of traditional diplomacy, as Katerina Dalacoura observes: ‘Time and again since 2001 public commentators and state officials, not to mention the top administration officials... have emphasised that democratic reform in the Middle East has become a core objective of US policy.’⁶¹ One of the most important expressions of this was President G. W. Bush’s speech at the NED, where he outlined the US’s position:

Our commitment to democracy is also tested in the Middle East, which ... must be a focus of American policy for decades to come. In many nations of the Middle East – countries of great strategic importance – democracy has not yet taken root... As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export. And with the spread of weapons that can bring catastrophic harm

⁶⁰ The G. W. Bush administration’s assumption that the promotion of political reform could eliminate the root causes of terrorism, one of the guiding hypotheses of its Middle East policy, was overly simplistic. As Carothers argues: ‘The sources of Islamic radicalism and the embrace of anti-American terrorism by some radicals are multifaceted and cannot be reduced to the simple proposition that the lack of democracy in the Arab world is the main cause.’ See Carothers, T., *Critical Mission: Essays on Democracy Promotion*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004, p. 252.

⁶¹ Dalacoura, K., ‘US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001: A Critique’, *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, Issue 5, 2005, p. 964.

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to our country and to our friends, it would be reckless to accept the status quo.⁶²

One important consequence of these public statements was to initiate a debate, at multiple levels throughout the region, regarding the need for reform. As Shadi Hamid argues: '[the G. W. Bush administration] helped inject democracy and democracy promotion into Arab public discourse.'⁶³ This category also included public diplomacy or propaganda efforts in the region, as for example the US's establishment of media outlets such as the Arabic-language 'Al-Hurra' television station, and the 'Al-Sawa' radio station. Mohan Dutta-Bergman argues that: 'public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East are constructed within the realm of informing and influencing the publics in the Middle East... The ultimate goal is to achieve changes in attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors... Influencing not understanding is defined as the primary objective of U.S. public diplomacy efforts.'⁶⁴ This reflects the legacy of the Reagan administration, which was the first to link public diplomacy explicitly with national security interests, including the promotion of democracy.⁶⁵

The second category of the G. W. Bush administration's democracy promotion strategy incorporated the main regional policy initiatives, which emphasised political, economic, social and cultural reform. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of 2002 and the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative of 2004 were the most prominent. Both were formulated in response to regional deficits in 'democracy', 'freedom' and 'gender equality' identified in the inaugural Arab Human Development Report of 2002.⁶⁶ MEPI was the G. W. Bush administration's primary regional initiative, it focused on four 'pillars' including economic, political and educational reform, as well as women's 'empowerment'.⁶⁷

⁶² Bush, 'Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy'.

⁶³ Hamid, S., 'Reviving Bush's Best Unfulfilled Idea: Democracy Promotion', *The Atlantic*, 13/9/2011, at <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/09/reviving-bushs-best-unfulfilled-idea-democracy-promotion/244935/>, accessed 26/7/2012.

⁶⁴ Dutta-Bergman, M., 'U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Middle East: A Critical Cultural Approach', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2006, p. 109.

⁶⁵ This is addressed in Chapter Two; See NSC, 'Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security', NSDD 77, 14/1/1983, at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-077.htm>, accessed 14/8/2012.

⁶⁶ *Arab Human Development Report 2002*.

⁶⁷ See Powell, C., 'The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative: Building Hope for the Years Ahead', Heritage Lecture No. 772, 17/12/2002, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Lecture/The-US-Middle->

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Jeremy Sharp argues that: ‘In order to meet these goals, MEPI officials, in conjunction with Arab governments, invest[ed] funds in programs geared toward strengthening Arab civil society, encouraging micro-enterprise, expanding political participation, and promoting women’s rights.’⁶⁸ BMENA was an attempt to establish a cooperative enterprise between G8, European and Middle Eastern governments, business and civil society. As such it constituted ‘the U.S. government’s overarching multilateral frame of reference for promoting reform in the Middle East.’⁶⁹ As with MEPI it focused on political, economic, social and cultural reform, although it also emphasised multi-level, intra-regional cooperation through its ‘Forum for the Future’ and ‘Democracy-Assistance Dialogue’ programs.⁷⁰ The consensus suggests that the various projects implemented through these initiatives were in fact similar to those introduced under the Clinton administration.⁷¹ Thomas Melia notes that: ‘the Bush Administration’s democracy promotion posture builds neatly on three decades of growing bipartisan consensus and the incremental development of institutional mechanisms by successive administrations of both parties to advance the policy.’⁷² This reinforces the argument that US democracy promotion in the Middle East must be seen as a long-term, gradualist strategy that has sought to facilitate the underlying conditions for eventual political transitions, and ultimately the achievement of hegemony. Both MEPI and BMENA were implemented by a range of existing governmental, non-governmental and private organisations that promote reform in the region, as for example USAID and the NED, their US-based partners such as the NDI, IRI and Freedom House, and local partners in the region, such as the Ibn Khaldoun Center of Egypt and the Kuwait Economic Society.

The main strategic components of the G. W. Bush administration’s approach to democracy promotion were outlined in a working paper entitled the ‘Greater Middle

East-Partnership-Initiative, accessed 12/7/2010; US Department of State, ‘Middle East Partnership Initiative’, at <http://www.mepi.state.gov/>, accessed 12/7/2010.

⁶⁸ Sharp, J., *The Middle East Partnership Initiative: An Overview*, CRS Report for Congress, 8/2/2005, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *In Support of Arab Democracy: Why and How*, Council on Foreign Relations, Independent Task Force Report No. 54, 2005, p. 38.

⁷⁰ See US Department of State, ‘BMENA Initiative’, at <http://bmena.state.gov/>, accessed 12/7/2010.

⁷¹ For instance Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers argue with regard to the proposed ‘Greater Middle East Initiative’, that its ‘many components... are mostly already present in existing US aid programs in the region.’ See Ottaway, M., Carothers, T., ‘Greater Middle East Initiative: Off to a False Start’, *Carnegie Policy Brief*, No. 29, (March) 2004, p. 1.

⁷² Melia, T., *The Democracy Bureaucracy: The Infrastructure of American Democracy Promotion*, Princeton Project on National Security, (September) 2005, p. 4.

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East Initiative' (GMEI).⁷³ Although later moderated in its realised form of BMENA, the confidential GMEI paper provides an unadulterated insight into the G. W. Bush administration's mindset, as it embarked on its attempt to democratise the Middle East. The proposals outlined in the GMEI differed from existing policies in three important respects. First, the GMEI focused explicitly on the denial of public freedoms, stating G-8 member states should 'encourage the region's governments to allow civil society organizations, including human rights and media NGOs, to operate freely without harassment or restrictions.'⁷⁴ This contrasts with the relative tolerance traditionally displayed by Western governments towards their Arab counterparts' domestic affairs. Second, the GMEI proposed increased 'direct funding to democracy, human rights, media, women's and other NGOs in the region', in essence circumventing Middle Eastern states' by directly allocating funds.⁷⁵ Finally, the GMEI proposed the formation of a body to monitor the initiative's progress, by drafting 'annual assessments of judicial reform efforts or media freedom in the region.'⁷⁶ In essence the above constituted an attempt to foster civil society in the region, in the explicit belief that: 'genuine reform in the GME [Greater Middle East] must be driven internally.'⁷⁷ This is a reflection of the longstanding emphasis of US democracy promotion on civil society, as the locus of hegemony. Sadiki highlights this as 'the most dangerous aspect of the GMEI and [BMENA].'⁷⁸ He claims that the various training schemes targeting Arab civil societies were little more than an attempt to '[hijack] civil societies from their own states', leaving 'the central state... with little control over its constituents.'⁷⁹

The proposed GMEI strained the US's relations with key regional allies such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, whose governments' recognised the danger it posed to their continuity. They successfully sought to pre-empt the US proposal through the

⁷³ See 'G-8 Greater Middle East Partnership', 13/2/2004, at <http://www.albab.com/arab/docs/international/gmep2004.htm>, accessed 20/8/2012.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Middle Eastern governments have often regulated the distribution of foreign aid. One example is Egypt's Mubarak, who repeatedly excluded organisations deemed a threat from consideration for aid. For an overview of the means used by authoritarian governments to undermine US efforts to implement reforms in their countries, see Lugar, R., *The Backlash Against Democracy Assistance*, National Endowment for Democracy, (June) 2006, pp. 15-30.

⁷⁶ 'G-8 Greater Middle East Partnership'.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Sadiki, L., *Rethinking Arab Democratization: Elections Without Democracy*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 172.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

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Arab League's 'Tunis Declaration', which promised to 'pursue reform and modernization... [to consolidate] the democratic practice... [to enlarge] participation in political and public life... [to foster] the role of all components of the civil society, including NGOs... [and to widen] women's participation in the political, economic, social, cultural and educational fields.'⁸⁰ In the face of widespread popular opposition in the Middle East, the GMEI proposal was eventually abandoned. But the relative ease with which these longstanding allies emasculated the GMEI has serious implications for the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East. It raises important questions about the US's ability to withstand the inevitable opposition to reform from authoritarian governments in the region. It illustrates an ongoing dilemma at the heart of US policy, which is divided between efforts to encourage political reform and the beneficial relationships accorded by such governments.

The third category of the G. W. Bush administrations' strategy of democracy promotion was the economic engagement of Middle Eastern countries. In part it constituted an attempt to address the underlying conditions contributing to the threat of terrorism emanating from the region, as for example unemployment, poverty and so forth. On a broader level though it can be seen in terms of the established American tradition of promoting free markets abroad, guided by the assumption of a linear relationship between capitalism and liberal democracy. Stephen Zunes argues:

It is noteworthy that, according to 2007 figures, the largest single recipient of funding from the National Endowment for Democracy for the Middle East was the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). Even during the height of U.S. assistance to Egypt and Algeria, the two most populous Arab countries, CIPE received three times as much NED funding as all

⁸⁰ See 'Tunis Declaration', 16th Arab Summit, 22-23/5/2004, at <http://www.arabsummit.tn/en/tunis-declaration.htm>, accessed 12/7/2010. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt announced its own reform initiative in response to the proposed GMEI. This is of interest, as it reflects the ascendant role of Islamist opposition movements in regional politics. The 'Initiative for Internal Reform in Egypt' included the following points: building Egyptian personality, combating poverty, and achieving political, social, judicial, electoral and economic reform. See 'Prominent Muslim Brotherhood Initiatives for Reform and Change in Egypt', compiled by Hassanein, M., in Cairo, Egypt; See also Brown, N., Hamzawy, A., 'The Draft Party Platform of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood: Foray Into Political Integration or Retreat Into Old Positions?', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 89, (January) 2008.

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human rights, development, legal, and civil society organizations combined.⁸¹

President G. W. Bush's most ambitious proposal was the creation of a Middle East free trade area.⁸² He claimed that: 'Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty, and taught men and women the habits of liberty. So I propose the establishment of a US-Middle East free trade area within a decade, to bring the Middle East into an expanding circle of opportunity, to provide hope for the people who live in that region.'⁸³ The G. W. Bush administration concluded a host of Free Trade Agreements with countries across the region, as for example Morocco and Bahrain in 2004, Oman in 2005, whilst initiating negotiations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2005. These were supported by a range of complimentary economic accords, such as Trade and Investment Framework Agreements, which were established with Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the UAE, and are usually seen as precursors to Free Trade Agreements.⁸⁴ The above augmented existing agreements with Middle Eastern states, but also reinforced the various economic initiatives implemented through MEPI and BMENA, in an attempt to encourage the spread of economic liberalisation throughout the region.

The final category of US democracy promotion under G. W. Bush encompassed military intervention, exemplified in the invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003. The US invasion concluded over a decade of hostilities between Saddam Hussein and the West, during which the US increasingly leant towards the notion of regime change. In the aftermath of September 11, citing concerns about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism, the US unilaterally invaded Iraq and overthrew Hussein, supported primarily by the United Kingdom. Democratisation was cited as a justification, albeit secondary, although it later

⁸¹ Zunes, S., 'The United States and the Prospects for Democracy in Islamic Countries', *Foreign Policy In Focus*, 21/1/2011, at http://www.fpif.org/articles/the_united_states_and_the_prospects_for_democracy_in_islamic_countries, accessed 20/8/2012.

⁸² Dunne, 'Integrating Democracy Promotion into U.S. Middle East Policy', p. 4; Dalacoura, 'US Democracy Promotion in the Arab Middle East since 11 September 2001', p. 964.

⁸³ Bush, G. W., 'Remarks by the President in Commencement Address at the University of South Carolina', 9/5/2003, at <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/20497.htm>, accessed 19/8/2012.

⁸⁴ Bolle, M., *Middle East Free Trade Area: Progress Report*, CRS Issue Brief for Congress, 27/1/2006, p. 10.

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emerged as the main post-factum rationalisation for the invasion.⁸⁵ The rationale for the US invasion of Iraq was underpinned by a number of concerns. These related primarily to the preservation of its core interests in the region, access to oil and the security of Israel. Accordingly the G. W. Bush administration saw the invasion of Iraq as an opportunity to restructure the increasingly stagnant security system the US had implemented in the region in the aftermath of the first Gulf War.⁸⁶ But beyond the immediate strategic aim of removing Hussein from power, the G. W. Bush administration saw the invasion of Iraq as an opportunity to transform not only the Iraqi state but by example the entire region, and in the process consolidate US influence in the Middle East. As Larry Diamond argued: ‘In its most extravagant expressions, the democratic transformation of Iraq is envisioned as a geopolitical earthquake that will shake Middle Eastern autocracies to their foundations and finally extend the global wave of democratization to the last major region to hold out against it.’⁸⁷ The perception within the G. W. Bush administration was that a liberated Iraq would serve as a regional ‘entrepôt’ for liberal democratic political values and free market economic principles, in other words America’s ideology, and that this would eventually facilitate the achievement of hegemony in the Middle East.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ This was in large part because Iraq’s alleged links to weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism were disproved. See US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Postwar Findings about Iraq’s WMD Programs and Links to Terrorism and How they Compare with Prewar Assessments’, 8/9/2006, at <http://intelligence.senate.gov/phaseiiaccuracy.pdf>, accessed 13/7/2010.

⁸⁶ At the time of the invasion in 2003, a US-dominated Iraq was perceived as isolating Iran and Syria, as well as allowing for the establishment of permanent bases which would negate the need for a US presence in Saudi Arabia.

⁸⁷ Diamond, L., ‘Can Iraq Become a Democracy?’, *Hoover Digest*, No. 2, 30/4/2003, at <http://www.hoover.org/publications/hoover-digest/article/7624>, accessed 20/8/2012.

⁸⁸ This is discussed at length in Chapter Five.

US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: The Regional Approach

US Democracy Promotion: The Regional Context

In a statement highlighting one of the many paradoxes of political reform in the Middle East, the Arab Human Development Report of 2004 notes that: ‘totally or partially elected parliaments now exist in all Arab countries except Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.’⁸⁹ Contrary to popular belief, the Middle East has experienced several waves of electoralism.⁹⁰ These have become more pronounced in the aftermath of the Cold War, as a result of both endogenous but particularly exogenous pressures. For instance the region experienced flurries of electoral activity following US actions in 1991, 2001 and 2003. Kuwait’s liberation by the US during the first Gulf War of 1991 was partly on conditions of political reform. Subsequently, after restoring the Constitution and the National Assembly, it held parliamentary elections six times between 1991 and 2008.⁹¹ Following September 11, 2001, both Bahrain and Qatar introduced new constitutions, approved through popular referenda.⁹² In 2002 Bahrain resumed parliamentary elections after a pause of almost thirty years. And after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Saudi Arabia held rare municipal elections in early 2005. Steven Cook argues: ‘While one can argue that now-King Abdallah [of Saudi Arabia] recognized the need to pursue a measure of political reform independently of US policy, the timing of the Kingdom’s recent municipal elections – the first in more than 40 years – betrays an implicit effort to respond to the Bush administration’s assertive calls for political change.’⁹³ This was followed by the holding of unprecedented parliamentary elections in the UAE in 2006. President G. W. Bush lauded this spate of Arab electoralism:

In Bahrain last year, citizens elected their own parliament for the first time in nearly three decades. Oman has extended the vote to all adult citizens; Qatar has a new constitution; Yemen has a multiparty political system; Kuwait has a directly elected national assembly; and Jordan held historic elections this

⁸⁹ *Arab Human Development Report 2004: Towards Freedom in the Arab World*, United Nations Development Programme, 2004, p. 9.

⁹⁰ See Sadiki, *Rethinking Arab Democratization*, particularly chapters two and three.

⁹¹ Ruhayem, R., ‘Does Kuwait Need a Political Revamp?’, *BBC News*, 21/3/2009, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7954741.stm>, accessed 17/12/2010.

⁹² Sadiki, *Rethinking Arab Democratization*, p. 154.

⁹³ Cook, S., ‘U.S. Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: Is It Working?’, *Islam Online*, 16/8/2005, at <http://www.cfr.org/religion-and-politics/us-democracy-promotion-middle-east-working/p8618>, accessed 20/8/2012.

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summer. Recent surveys in Arab nations reveal broad support for political pluralism, the rule of law, and free speech. These are the stirrings of Middle Eastern democracy, and they carry the promise of greater change to come.⁹⁴

Therefore with each crisis stemming from the region, US pressures, both direct and indirect, have led to the implementation of small but tangible reforms. Sadiki concludes that there 'is a minimum and immaterial conditionality tacitly written in the new Pax-Americana in the Arab Gulf: no protection without a form of representation.'⁹⁵ At the very least, however flawed, such electoral cycles condition Arab citizens in aspects of the institutional framework that underpins the promoted liberal democratic ideology.⁹⁶ This conforms with a long-term, gradualist approach to democracy promotion in the Middle East.

Yet while there may be a tendency to conflate electoralism with a process of democratisation, this is clearly not quite the case in the Middle East. As the Arab Human Development Report notes:

the right to political participation has often been little more than a ritual, representing a purely formal application of a constitutional entitlement. In most cases, elections have resulted in misrepresenting the will of the electorate and in low levels of representation for the opposition... These elections have generally reproduced the same ruling elites.⁹⁷

Elections in the Middle East have therefore predominantly been a means for authoritarian incumbents to legitimise their rule, creating the façade of progress through democratic accoutrements. The resilient, prevalent nature of authoritarianism in the Middle East evidences the limited progress of the US strategy of democracy promotion. Yet it must be emphasised that democracy promotion is only one element of US policy in the region, which has to take into account multiple demands placed on it by often divergent interests. As stated previously, it is only where conditions for

⁹⁴ Bush, 'Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy'.

⁹⁵ Sadiki, *Rethinking Arab Democratization*, p. 155.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁹⁷ *Arab Human Development Report 2004*, p. 9.

US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: The Regional Approach

political reform have been deemed favourable, that the US has promoted democracy. This has generally been determined by the anticipated impact on its national interests, as well as the presence of viable political forces amenable to these interests. This explains the US's longstanding policy of cooperation with authoritarian governments in the Middle East, including throughout the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations. Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers argue: 'US policy-makers are still effectively paralyzed by an old problem: the clash between their stated desire for a deep-reaching transformation of the region and their underlying interest in maintaining the useful relations they have with the present governments of many non-democratic states there.'⁹⁸ This dilemma was reflected in the etatist emphasis of the strategy of democracy promotion, as for example the MEPI and BMENA regional initiatives, which while espousing the empowerment of civil society, were in fact largely dependent on Arab governments for their implementation.⁹⁹ The ambiguity of this dependency was illustrated by the Arab League's aforementioned pre-emption of the GMEI.

⁹⁸ Ottaway, Carothers, 'Greater Middle East Initiative', pp. 1-2. The crux of this dilemma lies in the security concerns that inform US policy in the region, as for example the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. These concerns were reflected in the strategic definition of the 'Greater Middle East' utilised by the G. W. Bush administration, which in addition to the Arab Middle Eastern states incorporated Israel, Afghanistan, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. In essence it conformed to the definition used by the US in the 'war on terror', which the strategy of democracy promotion complemented. This definition construed the region as a uniform, monolithic entity, failing to account for its ethnic, social and cultural diversity, as well the divergent interests of the various states and actors within it. The implication is that US reform policies are often implemented with little variance across this vast, heterogeneous region.

⁹⁹ Daniel Neep refers to the US's 'illogical and inherently contradictory... agitation in favor of the authority and power of the state, even as it calls for the greater empowerment of society in formal and informal channels of political participation.' See Neep, D., 'Dilemmas of Democratization in the Middle East: The "Forward Strategy of Freedom"', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XI, No. 3, (Fall) 2004, pp. 80-1.

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Conclusion

The effort to promote democracy in the Middle East, one that has emerged gradually since the Clinton administration, arguably represents one of the most significant departures in US policy to the region. Yet it forms part of a broader trend in US foreign policy, as witnessed in Latin America and elsewhere, from supporting authoritarianism to democratic governance. This constitutes a strategic shift from advocating coercive to consensual systems of government abroad. With its roots in the economic engagement that began in the 1980s, the implementation of US democracy promotion in the Middle East remains in its early stages. The Clinton administration emphasised economic reform in the belief that, alongside the strengthening of civil society, this was a prerequisite for political reform. The G. W. Bush administration largely concurred with this approach, but it engaged authoritarian allies in the region far more forcefully on political reform. Both administrations saw the strategy of democracy promotion – and its various political, military, economic, social and cultural components – as a means of pursuing enduring stability in the Middle East. The Clinton administration in terms of consolidating the Arab-Israeli peace process, the G. W. Bush administration in terms of eliminating Islamic fundamentalism. Over the long term, both also saw it as a means of encouraging the diffusion of America's liberal democratic ideology throughout the Middle East and its societies. In other words, as the pursuit of a Gramscian hegemony. The strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East is clearly still underway and evolving. What the above reflect, in terms of the gradual implementation of an array of political, economic, social and cultural reforms, is an ongoing transition in US policy to the Middle East, from supporting coercive authoritarian governments to encouraging the emergence of consensual elite-based democracies. The following chapters will explore the US strategy of democracy promotion, and the pursuit of hegemony, in the context of the individual case studies of Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait.

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‘To promote peace and stability in the broader Middle East, the United States will work with our friends in the region to fight the common threat of terror, while we encourage a higher standard of freedom. Hopeful reform is already taking hold in an arc from Morocco to Jordan to Bahrain... And the great and proud nation of Egypt, which showed the way toward peace in the Middle East, can now show the way toward democracy in the Middle East.’¹

– *President George W. Bush*

Introduction

The US has maintained a close relationship with Egypt since the late 1970s. Bridging the African and Asian continents, with the Suez Canal providing access from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, Egypt occupies a key geo-strategic position in the region. The most populous Arab state, Egypt has extended its political and cultural influence throughout the Arab world. As a result it has long been recognised as vital to American regional interests, with the US attempting to cultivate relations with Egypt alongside its rise to power in the Middle East. This met with varying degrees of success. During the Cold War, Egypt was primarily regarded in terms of its strategic value in the conflict against the Soviet Union. One of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, Egypt was courted by both East and West. Beginning under the presidency of Richard Nixon though, the US gradually lured it away from the Soviet sphere.² This transition was finalized with the US-mediated Camp David Accords of 1979, which established peace between Egypt and Israel, ending over thirty years of conflict.

¹ Bush, G. W., ‘State of the Union Address’, 2/2/2005, at <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/02.02.05.html>, accessed 21/8/2012.

² *Time Magazine* reported on Nixon’s 1974 visit to Egypt: ‘The changes in the Middle East have been nothing short of astonishing since Kissinger went to work in the wake of the October war. Eight months ago, Egyptians regarded Nixon as the villain who was sending Phantom jets to the Israelis. Now Sadat has gone so far as to say that the impeachment of Nixon “would be a tragedy”.’ The article concluded: ‘Both Nixon and Sadat had good reason to be pleased with the visit and the agreement that it had produced. Egypt was getting material aid and a valuable psychological prop. The U.S. had gained new and close ties with the leading state in the Arab world – an advance of great strategic significance if it can be sustained.’ See ‘Diplomacy: A Triumphant Middle East Hegira’, *Time Magazine*, 24/6/1974, at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,944867,00.html#ixzz1RFCLG2BA>, accessed 5/7/2011.

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This chapter will argue that the US has sought, through the strategy of democracy promotion, to promote an array of political, economic and social reforms in Egypt, with the aim of facilitating the conditions for an eventual transition to elite-based democracy. First it will account for the establishment of the contemporary US-Egyptian relationship, and the main premises that underpin it. It will then address the Clinton administration's engagement of Egypt, with particular emphasis on its policies of economic and civil society reform. The chapter will then examine the G. W. Bush administration's policy to Egypt, focusing on its attempts to promote democracy in the country, amidst the broader post-September 11 reform impetus in the Middle East.

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The US and Egypt: The Foundations of a ‘Special’ Relationship

The cornerstone of the contemporary US-Egyptian relationship has been the peace between Egypt and Israel. William Quandt argues that: ‘bilateral ties between the United States and Egypt should really be seen as one side of a triangle, the other sides of which link the United States to Israel and Israel to Egypt.’³ Characterized since 1979 by extensive cooperation on the political, economic and military fronts, the US’s relationship with Egypt under Hosni Mubarak was based primarily on the country’s regional standing.⁴ This reflected the premise that Egypt, as the largest and arguably most influential Arab state, served as a moderating presence in the broader Middle East. It preserved the peace treaty with Israel, with which it maintains a generally ‘cold’ peace, and overall sought to promote regional stability, for example by facilitating periodic Arab-Israeli negotiations.⁵ Moreover it generally supported US policy in the Middle East, however controversial, for example the blockade of Gaza following 2007.⁶ In return, the US has provided Egypt with around \$2 billion in annual economic and military assistance since 1979, making it the second-largest recipient of US aid after Israel.⁷ The vast majority of this is military aid, which totals approximately \$1.3 billion annually. Furthermore the US has provided Egypt with ‘over \$28 billion in economic and development assistance’ since 1975.⁸ This reflects US attempts to encourage political, economic, social and cultural reforms within Egyptian society. The aggressive privatisation programme undertaken by the Mubarak government during the 1990s and 2000s is one such example.

³ Quandt, W., *The United States and Egypt: An Essay on Policy for the 1990s*, The Brookings Institution, 1990, p. 5.

⁴ In the face of popular discontent, Mubarak resigned the presidency of Egypt in February 2012, bringing an end to over thirty years in power.

⁵ In 1997 Mubarak responded to a question about Egypt’s peace with Israel: ‘It will stay cold, believe me. It will stay cold for a long time to come.’ Cited in Satloff, R., ‘Prepared Testimony of Dr. Robert Satloff, Executive Director, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, before the House Committee on International Relations, Subject - “U.S. Policy Towards Egypt”’, 10/4/1997, at <http://www.iupui.edu/~anthkb/a104/egypt/egypt97.htm>, accessed 19/10/2011.

⁶ The US supported Israel’s blockade of Gaza after its takeover by Hamas in June 2007. It encouraged Egypt to prevent smuggling to Gaza, aiding the construction of a steel barrier across their shared border. See Sharp, J., ‘The Egypt-Gaza Border and its Effect on Israeli-Egyptian Relations’, *CRS Report for Congress*, 1/2/2008.

⁷ Sharp, J., ‘Egypt: Background and U.S. Relations’, *CRS Report for Congress*, 12/5/2009, p. 6.

⁸ Mekay, E., ‘Privatisation Aided Egypt Revolt, Army Says’, *Inter Press Service*, 8/4/2011, at <http://www.globalissues.org/news/2011/04/08/9211>, accessed 5/7/2011; US Department of State, ‘Background Note: Egypt’, 10/11/2010, at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5309.htm#relations>, accessed 21/3/2011.

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From 1979 onwards, Mubarak's Egypt established itself as the US's main Arab ally in the region. Perhaps the clearest indication of this was Egypt's decision to support the 1991 Gulf War, despite widespread domestic and considerable regional popular opposition.⁹ As Edward Walker notes:

In August 1990, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the military relationship between the United States and Egypt changed dramatically. The diplomacy of the Gulf War required the United States to find a major Islamic partner to justify and balance the presence of... [US] armed forces in Saudi Arabia. Egypt provided that balance by bringing to Operation Desert Storm an armored division, equipped and trained by the United States. Egypt also opened its airspace and the Suez Canal to US forces.¹⁰

This overt demonstration of support led to significant economic rewards for Egypt. Matthew Gray argues that this 'initially included US and Arab debt forgiveness of about US\$14 billion. After the 1991 agreement with the IMF, the Paris Club [of creditor nations] forgave about US\$10 billion, or half of what Egypt owed, and provided a further US\$4 billion in restructuring and grants on the remainder of Egypt's debt.'¹¹ The first Gulf War therefore helped to consolidate US-Egyptian ties, paving the way for closer cooperation over the coming years.

The strength of the US-Egyptian relationship has fluctuated according to domestic and regional imperatives on both sides. Under the Clinton administration, relations were conducted on largely positive terms, motivated on the regional level by both countries' engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, while domestically the US's emphasis on economic reform was largely welcomed by the

⁹ Gregory Gause notes: 'In Egypt, opposition political parties opposed the war against Iraq and a number of protests were held at college campuses.' See Gause, F., G., 'The Gulf War as Arab Civil War' in Bacevich, A., Inbar, E., (eds.), *The Gulf War of 1991 Reconsidered*, Routledge, 2002, p. 32. Uri Kupferschmidt claims that in one instance '10,000 students demonstrated on the Cairo University campus "in solidarity with their Iraqi brothers who are being subjected to death and annihilation".' See Kupferschmidt, U., 'Egypt', in Ayalon, A., (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Westview Press, Vol. 15, 1991, p. 343. Although the conflict was supported by the Arab League, and by governments such as Syria and Morocco, public opinion in most Arab countries remained fundamentally opposed to the war, supporting the Iraqi populace if not Saddam Hussein himself.

¹⁰ Walker, E., 'United States-Egyptian Relations: Strengthening Our Partnership', *SALS Review*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1997, p. 150.

¹¹ Gray, M., 'Economic Reform, Privatization and Tourism in Egypt', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (April) 1998, p. 99.

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Mubarak government. Under the G. W. Bush administration however, the US-Egyptian relationship was far more fractious. The invasion of Iraq in 2003, the chaos that subsequently engulfed the country and the ensuing destabilisation of the wider region, gravely aggrieved the Egyptian government. This was exacerbated by the G. W. Bush administration's forthright emphasis on political reform, often highlighting Egypt specifically. It ultimately led to the suspension, from 2004 onwards, of President Mubarak's twenty-year old tradition of annually visiting Washington.¹² Margaret Scobey, US Ambassador to Egypt under the G. W. Bush administration, described Egypt as a 'stubborn and recalcitrant ally', citing its 'self-perception as the "indispensable Arab state".'¹³ Yet despite these fluctuations, the underlying foundations of the relationship – the Egyptian-Israeli peace and the stability of Egypt and the broader region – retained their strategic relevance throughout the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations. As such the US-Egyptian relationship remained largely intact, with the degree of affinity under question rather than the bond itself.

¹² Scobey, M., 'Scenesetter: President Mubarak's Visit to Washington', US Embassy in Egypt, 19/5/2009, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/207723>, accessed 21/3/2011.

¹³ Ibid.

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The Clinton Administration: Promoting Economic and Social Reform in Egypt

Overall the US-Egyptian relationship retained a sense of continuity under the Clinton administration, with US policy to Egypt reflecting the themes of its broader regional approach. An emphasis on the Arab-Israeli peace process predominated, but the concepts of democratic enlargement and in particular free market expansion were increasingly important components of US policy to the Middle East, and were indeed related to the peace process.¹⁴ The importance of the US's relationship with Egypt on the regional level was underscored by President Clinton in 1993: 'Egypt has acted as one of our Nation's partners over a long time. They were actively involved in the Camp David peace process over a decade ago. And today, Egypt remains one of our most important global partners. We continue our partnership in working for peace and stability in the Middle East.'¹⁵ The strategic rationale underpinning the US-Egyptian relationship, namely the peace between Egypt and Israel, retained its pre-eminence throughout the Clinton era. Indeed its significance was arguably enhanced in light of Clinton's extensive efforts to facilitate an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. The conflict's impact on core US interests meant that its resolution emerged as the central focus of US Middle East policy. Egypt, as the only actor able to engage with all the relevant regional parties simultaneously, assumed an integral role in facilitating the often splenetic, ultimately unsuccessful negotiations. Examples of negotiations hosted by Egypt include the Sharm El-Sheikh 'Summit of the Peacemakers' in 1996, the Sharm El-Sheikh and Taba 'Middle East Peace' summits in 2000, as well as numerous lower-level meetings over the years. Another important focus of US regional policy, and therefore an important area of US-Egyptian cooperation, concerned the 'dual containment' of Iran and Iraq. This policy was the centrepiece of the US security system in the Middle East following 1991, replacing the 'balancing' of Iraq against Iran with their mutual isolation. Gregory Gause summarises the main aims of the policy: 'isolating both countries regionally, cutting them off from the world economic and trading system, and encouraging a regime change in Iraq.'¹⁶ Here Egypt's role was based on its participation in a loose coalition of 'moderate' Arab states allied to the US, which also included Jordan, Saudi Arabia

¹⁴ As discussed in Chapter Three, the Clinton administration believed that economic reform in the region would consolidate peace and facilitate political reform.

¹⁵ Clinton, W. J., 'The President's News Conference With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt', 25/10/1993, at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PPP-1993-book2/pdf/PPP-1993-book2-doc-pg1818.pdf>, accessed 9/7/2011.

¹⁶ Gause, F. G., 'The Illogic of Dual Containment', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2, 1994, p. 56.

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and the other member-states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Egypt's value to the US, with reference to the above, was derived primarily from its historic role as a leading Arab state. As Jeremy Sharp observes: 'Other Arab states look to Egypt to initiate action or set an example on regional problems. For example, in the past, other Arab states followed the Egyptian lead in turning to the Soviet Union for weapons, in nationalizing foreign interests, in land reform programs, in introducing democratic institutions, and in many other areas.'¹⁷ Furthermore, he argues that Egypt serves as 'a moderate voice in Arab councils, and in some cases... [the US relies] upon Egypt to persuade less moderate Arab states of the wisdom of compromise.'¹⁸ The implementation of US regional policy under Clinton was therefore dependent to a significant extent on Egyptian cooperation. Egypt nevertheless opposed US policy on several occasions, for example by supporting an Arab League resolution calling for an economic boycott of Israel in 1997, and by maintaining close relations with Libya before its international rehabilitation in 2003-4.¹⁹ This reflects the nuanced role Egypt has played with reference to US Middle East policy since 1979, acting as a facilitator rather than strictly as a proxy.

On the domestic front, the Clinton administration's engagement of Egypt mainly concerned economic policy. Since Anwar Sadat's *infitah* or 'opening' of the economy in the mid-1970s, Egypt had gradually abandoned the state-led development model, increasingly encouraging private investment from domestic and foreign sources.²⁰ In 1991 this shift towards economic liberalisation was formalised when, in the face of a fiscal crisis, Egypt reached a stand-by arrangement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Shortly afterwards, it accepted a structural adjustment loan from the World Bank. Combined with a reduction of Egypt's debt by the Paris Club of creditors, this comprised an international effort to 'stabilize' the

¹⁷ Sharp, J., 'Egypt-United States Relations', *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, 15/6/2005, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Oweidat, N., Benard, C., Stahl, D., Kildani, W., O'Connell, E., Grant, A., *The Kefaya Movement: A Case Study of a Grassroots Reform Initiative*, RAND Corporation, 2008, p. 5.

²⁰ Gray argues that: 'The policy of *infitah*... was as much a political action as an economic one, being an aspect of Sadat's diplomatic reorientation of Egypt away from the Soviet Union towards the West. See Gray, 'Economic Reform, Privatization and Tourism in Egypt', pp. 93-4. Erin Snider claims that: 'the launch of *infitah* raised expectations that economic reform would give way to political reforms as well, and eventually accelerate a transition to democratisation. While some liberalisation did occur, it was followed by the contraction of liberties over time that demonstrated the state's desire to preserve its power despite economic and social changes underway.' See Snider, E., *Technocrats, Bureaucrats, and Democrats: The Political Economy of U.S. Assistance for Democracy in Egypt and Morocco since 1990*, PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2010, p. 96.

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Egyptian economy, and preceded a rapid, aggressive introduction of free market reforms.²¹ Gray attributes this to: ‘A combination of pro-liberalization forces and actors, internal and external to Egypt, [which] were in place by 1991 and for the first time were more powerful than those opposing economic liberalization.’²² He claims that:

Internationally, two factors are important: first, the growing chorus of pro-liberalization groups – especially the United States and USAID, the IMF, the World Bank, and the Paris Club of creditors – which in the late 1980s began to unite in their efforts to pressure the Mubarak government for economic change; and second, the economic windfall, especially in the form of debt forgiveness but also in general terms, which Egypt enjoyed as a result of the 1990-91 Gulf War.²³

This also marked the first time funding for political reform programs in Egypt was provided explicitly by the US, as part of USAID’s economic reform agenda.²⁴

The liberalisation of the Egyptian economy continued apace under the Clinton administration, whose flagship economic policy was the 1994 US-Egypt Partnership for Economic Growth. Commonly known as the ‘Gore-Mubarak Partnership’, the initiative was an important driving force behind Egypt’s transition to a market economy, its main purpose being to maintain a high-level dialogue between the two governments on economic reform.²⁵ The Partnership’s stated goals were to: ‘Expand mutual economic cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, and science and technology; work with Egyptian Government initiatives to foster economic reform, promote economic growth, and facilitate job creation; [And] Support Egyptian

²¹ Sakr, A., *Arab Republic of Egypt: Client Perspectives on Elements of World Bank Support*, Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank, 2006, at http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTMIDINCCOUN/Resources/Egypt_fs.pdf, accessed 19/7/2011.

²² Gray, ‘Economic Reform, Privatization and Tourism in Egypt’, p. 99.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Snider argues Egypt was one the earliest cases in which USAID sought to develop democracy promotion programs tailored to the individual country’s political context, this because of its strategic importance. See Snider, *Technocrats, Bureaucrats, and Democrats*, p. 105.

²⁵ Sowers, J., ‘Egypt’s Economy: U.S. Interests and Market Reforms’, *CRS Report for Congress*, 18/9/2000, p. 2. A key element of the Partnership was the Presidents’ Council, which brought together senior private sector executives from both Egypt and the US to represent their interests on a governmental level. See Kotschwar, B., Schott, J., *Reengaging Egypt: Options for US-Egypt Economic Relations*, Peterson Institute for International Economics, (January) 2010, p. 12.

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efforts to increase the role of the private sector in its economy.²⁶ This led to a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in 1999, which US Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky claimed: ‘marked the first step toward creating freer trade between our two countries, and established the basis for stronger economic ties to bolster our joint efforts at further peace in the region.’²⁷ The possibility of a Free Trade Agreement was also discussed, although it was not realised. Throughout this period Egypt continued to receive Economic Support Funds (ESF) from the US, which totalled \$815 million from 1993 to 1998.²⁸ The stated purpose of the ESF program is to promote ‘the economic and political foreign policy interests of the United States by providing assistance to allies and countries in transition to democracy, supporting the Middle East peace negotiations, and financing economic stabilization programs.’²⁹ Economic engagement – in terms of reform, aid and trade – therefore proved the central emphasis of US policy to Egypt under the Clinton administration. This reflected the Administration’s fundamental belief in economic reform and integration as the basis of regional stability and a permanent resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Robert Pelletreau, Assistant Secretary For Near Eastern Affairs, stated: ‘We support economic liberalization in Egypt and throughout the region because that is a prerequisite for prosperity and stability.’³⁰

The Clinton administration’s engagement of Egypt on the economic level allowed for a gradual redefinition of the relationship. This from a purely strategic alliance in 1979, to one that began to incorporate other areas such as political and social reform. Fareed Ezzedine argues that: ‘Since 1992, when Egypt began pursuing an IMF-prescribed economic liberalization program, the significance of US-Egyptian economic relations grew, allowing the US to raise governance and human rights

²⁶ US Department of State, ‘Fact Sheet: US-Egyptian Partnership-Economic Growth and Development’, 29/5/1996, at <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/bureaus/nea/960529USEgyptianEconomic.html>, accessed 11/7/2011.

²⁷ Barshefsky, C., cited in Kotschwar, Schott, *Reengaging Egypt*, p. 13. See ‘Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Arab Republic of Egypt Concerning the Development of Trade and Investment Relations’, 1/7/1999, at <http://www.ustr.gov/sites/default/files/U.S.-%20-%20Egypt%20TIFA.pdf>, accessed 23/10/2012.

²⁸ Sharp, *Egypt-United States Relations*, p. 9

²⁹ *U.S. Foreign Assistance Reference Guide*, US Department of State & US Agency for International Development, 2005, p. 6.

³⁰ Pelletreau, R., ‘Assistant Secretary For Near Eastern Affairs Statement before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the House Foreign Affairs Committee’, 14/6/1994, at <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/bureaus/nea/940614PelletreauEvents.html>, accessed 15/7/2011.

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issues with Cairo.³¹ The economic initiatives that drove US-Egyptian relations under Clinton reflected an underlying conviction in the organic relationship between free markets and democracy, with the presence of the former a necessary condition for the latter. Michael Cox argues that:

Clinton and his foreign policy advisers... really did think that over time democracy could not function without the market, or the market without democracy. Competition at the ballot box and in the marketplace were in this sense twins, with democracy being the necessary political accompaniment of free enterprise, and free enterprise the only secure foundation upon which to construct and sustain democracy.³²

This conviction was evidenced throughout the Administration's policy towards Egypt. A USAID report claimed in 1999 that: 'substantial and pervasive economic policy reform [in Egypt] is a necessary and largely sufficient condition for continued social and political stability, as well as future total human development and evolution to more democratic political processes.'³³ In no small part the Clinton administration's 'econocentric' policy constituted an attempt to foster the Egyptian middle & elite classes, as constituencies with broadly corresponding interests to those of the US.³⁴ As Douglas Brinkley argues, the Clinton administration believed that: 'Only countries with free-spending middle classes... could become democratic and adopt... Western values.'³⁵ These constituencies have served as a cornerstone of US hegemonic efforts, due to their presence in key strategic areas such as government, business and civil society.

³¹ Ezzedine, F., 'Mubarak in Washington: Assessing the US-Egyptian Bilateral Relationship', *MERIP*, 30/6/1999, at <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero063099>, accessed 15/7/2011.

³² Cox, M., 'Wilsonianism Resurgent? The Clinton Administration and American Democracy Promotion in the late 20th Century', International Studies Association, 41st Annual Convention, Los Angeles, USA, 14-18/3/2000.

³³ Montrie, C., Diamond, C., Mahboob, A., *Program Evaluation Study Plan for the USAID Program and its Impact on Egypt Policy Reform Programs*, USAID, 25/2/1999, p. 13, at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDABR401.pdf, accessed 22/8/2012.

³⁴ For a brief insight into the ties between Egyptian elites and the West, see Sachs, S., 'Egypt's Elite Torn by Arab Roots and Western Ties', *New York Times*, 27/10/2001, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/27/world/egypt-s-elite-torn-by-arab-roots-and-western-ties.html?src=pm>, accessed 13/9/2011.

³⁵ Brinkley, D., 'Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine', *Foreign Policy*, No. 106, (Spring) 1997, p. 118.

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Yet the Clinton administration's approach towards political reform in Egypt was largely tacit. Democracy promotion programmes, as Erin Snider notes, were usually 'framed in economic terms, and frequently diluted to minimise offence to the Egyptian government and correspondingly, any disruptions to the relationship between the two states.'³⁶ This was reflected in the Administration's failure to condemn the ruling National Democratic Party's (NDP) blatant manipulation of the 1995 parliamentary elections. David Sorenson claims that: 'the NDP got 95 percent of the vote, giving it 421 seats in the 444-seat body – with widespread allegations of bribery, ballot stuffing, and a lack of attention to other candidates and parties by the state-run media.'³⁷ The majority of democracy promotion programmes under Clinton therefore aimed at the strengthening of civil society which, alongside economic reform, constituted one of the administration's key policy emphases in Egypt. As early as the 1970s, the US supported reforms in Egypt in areas as diverse as infrastructure, agriculture and healthcare, through USAID and other channels. Under the Clinton administration USAID's involvement in Egypt ranged from the reform of the tax system and combating corruption, to agricultural reform and family planning.³⁸ Many of these reforms addressed Egyptian civil society, which although characterised by its vitality, remained marginal in relation to the Goliathan Egyptian state.³⁹ This emphasis on civil society is of particular importance, given that hegemony in the Gramscian understanding is situated at this location precisely. By integrating democracy promotion with economic, social and cultural policies aimed at strengthening civil society, the Clinton administration sought to influence Egypt at the societal level. This because hegemony ultimately involves the voluntary

³⁶ Snider, *Technocrats, Bureaucrats, and Democrats*, p. 124.

³⁷ Sorenson, D., 'The Dynamics of Political Dissent in Egypt', *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (Fall) 2003, p. 216. Richard Murphy and Gregory Gause note: 'Called upon for a comment, the [US] Embassy simply said that it took cognizance of the fact that there were reports of fraud in the voting. This response pleased no one. The Egyptian government was enraged, with government newspapers rejecting what they termed American interference in the domestic affairs of Egypt. Advocates of democracy and human rights questioned why Washington would keep silent in the face of such massive fraud. Egyptian liberals with whom we spoke were genuinely puzzled and hurt that the United States would not even provide verbal support to a cause – elections – that Washington actively encourages elsewhere.' See Murphy, R., Gause, F. G., 'Democracy and U.S. Policy in the Muslim Middle East', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (January) 1997, p. 62.

³⁸ Kamran Ali addresses the pedagogical approach of US policy towards Egyptian society, detailing USAID's role in encouraging population control in Egypt. See Ali, K., *Planning the Family in Egypt: New Bodies, New Selves*, University of Texas Press, 2002, especially pp. 32-35.

³⁹ Snider argues that: 'twenty-four political parties exist in Egypt, more than 15,000 non-governmental organisations are registered officially with the government, elections are contested, and the state has one of the most vibrant and expansive opposition presses in the Arab world.' See Snider, *Technocrats, Bureaucrats, and Democrats*, p. 97.

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internalisation by society itself of the promoted ideology, in the case of the US a synthesis of liberal democratic political values and free market economic principles. The rationale behind the US's approach is outlined in an unpublished USAID paper on Egyptian NGOs, which states:

While it is more simple to conclude that a transformation of [Egypt's] prevailing political culture is absolutely dependent on the prevailing political system and its practices... one can also argue that changes in the political culture can happen at the society level, prior to its happening at the political leadership level. Through information exchange, exposure to other countries' and groups' experiences, and the provision of channels of participation – albeit local in nature – this can have a powerful effect on creating empowerment in communities that might induce a broader dynamic for change.⁴⁰

In particular from 1997 onwards, USAID emphasised the funding of Egyptian civil society in its democracy promotion programs, highlighting the 'desire to increase civil society participation and promote an improved environment for democracy' as one of its main strategic objectives.⁴¹ In part this reflected the belief, as Amy Hawthorne argues, that 'giving private groups an expanded role in development would advance its larger policy goal of economic liberalization.'⁴² Moreover, Hawthorne claims that: 'Some U.S. officials saw service NGOs as a potential counterweight to the Islamic charities and other groups that were a major source of grassroots support for Islamist opposition movements.'⁴³ The above evince the intrinsic relationship posited between free markets, democracy and civil society under the US strategy of democracy promotion. They further demonstrate the Clinton administration's belief that political reform in Egypt would occur incrementally, following free market reforms and the strengthening of civil society, and perhaps most importantly of all, without prematurely undermining the stability of the incumbent Mubarak government. The latter is reflected in the fact that the reform of Egyptian state institutions remained an important emphasis of US policy

⁴⁰ 'The NGO Service Center Activity', USAID Egypt, 2002, p. 1, cited in Hawthorne, A., 'Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 44, (March) 2004, p. 24.

⁴¹ Snider, *Technocrats, Bureaucrats, and Democrats*, pp. 120-1.

⁴² Hawthorne, 'Middle Eastern Democracy: Is Civil Society the Answer?', p. 15.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

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throughout. This was because of the fundamental imperative of maintaining the stability of the Egyptian state, without which any measure of reform would be redundant.

Mubarak's Egypt epitomized a key, ongoing dilemma for US policy in the Middle East. This in terms of the divide between the US's support of authoritarian governments reliant on coercion, in the name of stability over the short-term, and its aspirations of encouraging the emergence of more consensual systems of governance, namely elite-based democracies, as a means of ensuring a more enduring form of stability and eventually hegemony. The Clinton administration's failure to push aggressively for political reform in Egypt can be attributed to the following factors. First, the fear of undermining Egypt's domestic and by extension regional stability in the near-term. This is reflected in Jason Brownlee's statement that: 'successive U.S. administrations have tended to oppose democratization in Egypt... believing that a push to check the Egyptian president's power might bring about an "Algerian scenario" in which Islamists would take hold of government.'⁴⁴ While true to an extent, this argument is overly simplistic, as it ignores the multiple, underlying processes of reform instituted by the US. Second, the Administration did not want to undermine ongoing negotiations on the Arab-Israeli conflict, in which Egypt played an integral role. As Michele Dunne claims: 'it was easier to cut deals with autocratic rulers than with unpredictable parliaments and electorates.'⁴⁵ Third, the perception of a lack of viable conditions for immediate reform, foremost the absence of political forces amenable to the US, capable of securing power through the ballot box. Historically the absence of such conditions has meant that authoritarian allies are likely to be maintained by the US, and this has disproportionately been the case in the Middle East. In Egypt the presence of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood as the most likely alternative to the NDP, meant that the US was undoubtedly reluctant to encourage any scenario under which it could assume power. This was evidenced in a senior Clinton administration official's statement:

⁴⁴ Brownlee, J., 'The Decline of Pluralism in Mubarak's Egypt', in Diamond, L., Plattner, M., Brumberg, D., (eds.), *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, John Hopkins University Press, 2003, p. 54.

⁴⁵ Dunne, M., 'Integrating Democracy Promotion into U.S. Middle East Policy', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 50, (October) 2004, p. 4.

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No one is trying to underestimate the [Islamic extremist] threat. But what you have in Egypt and part of – a large part of our aid effort to Egypt is targeted on this is – is economic reforms, because it is only through moving forward on the economic/social agenda that one is able... to undercut the ability of these Islamic extremists to undermine the political process, and quite frankly, come to power.⁴⁶

This fear was repeatedly exploited by Mubarak to justify his resistance to American demands for political reform, in effect claiming that the NDP served as the only credible bulwark against Islamic radicalism; an argument that seemingly gained credence in light of the violent Islamist insurgency that racked the country from 1990 to 1997.⁴⁷

Overall therefore, the Clinton administration had a limited impact on political reform in Egypt, at least over the short-term. However if one understands the pursuit of hegemony to be a long-term, gradual US strategy, the Clinton administration's emphasis on promoting free market reforms and strengthening civil society, in the belief that these were prerequisites for democratisation, indicates that political reform in Egypt was on the American agenda, albeit not a priority at that juncture. A precursor to the G. W. Bush administration's more forceful, immediate emphasis on political reform, which subsequently overshadowed the Clinton administration's earlier efforts, Clinton's policies can nonetheless be seen as contributing significantly towards the goal of hegemony.

⁴⁶ Cited in Momani, B., 'Promoting Economic Liberalization in Egypt: From U.S. Foreign Aid to Trade and Investment', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 3, (September) 2003, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁷ 'Egypt - The Development of Foreign Policy', in Chapin Metz, H., (ed.), *Egypt: A Country Study*, Library of Congress, 1990, at <http://countrystudies.us/egypt/125.htm>, accessed 21/7/2011; Gerges, F., 'The End of the Islamist Insurgency in Egypt?: Costs and Prospects', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 4, (Autumn) 2000.

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The G. W. Bush Administration: Promoting Political Reform in Egypt

Over the course of two terms in office, the G. W. Bush administration's policy towards the Middle East derived explicitly from the events of September 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania precipitated the introduction of a more aggressive, interventionist American foreign policy, particularly so in the Middle East. The incorporation of concepts such as pre-emption under the Bush doctrine, actually implemented in the invasion of Iraq, illustrate the extent of the reorientation of US Middle East policy. Egypt, as a key regional ally and powerbroker, in many ways bore the brunt of this. The invasion of Afghanistan on the borders of the region in 2001, followed by Iraq at the heart of the region in 2003, led to the respective overthrows of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein, amidst inflamed tensions throughout the Middle East. This had serious implications for Egypt's regional status, one being a strengthened Iran, as a sworn enemy of both deposed regimes.⁴⁸ Nonetheless Egypt continued to serve as the principal facilitator of US policy in the region, demonstrating that the US-Egyptian relationship retained the utmost importance for both parties. Despite having opposed the invasion of Iraq, the Mubarak government cooperated with subsequent US efforts to stabilise the country.⁴⁹ It proved an important partner in G. W. Bush's 'war on terror', cooperating in terms of intelligence, interrogations and the extraordinary renditions of suspects, continuing a long-established collaboration on security matters.⁵⁰ Egypt also supported US attempts to isolate Iran through international sanctions, in response to its pursuit of nuclear power. Finally it continued to assist US efforts to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict, as manifested in the G. W. Bush administration's 2002 'Roadmap for Peace'.

The subject of political reform in Egypt was first broached in President G. W. Bush's speech at the 20th anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in

⁴⁸ A US Embassy briefing notes: 'Omar Suleiman [Director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service] takes an especially hard line on Tehran and frequently refers to the Iranians as "devils".' See Jones, S., 'Scenesetter for Ambassador Crocker's Visit to Cairo', US Embassy in Egypt, 25/10/2007, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/127067>, accessed 6/9/2011.

⁴⁹ Mubarak warned that the invasion would lead to 'one hundred new [Osama] bin Ladens.' See 'Mubarak Warns of "100 bin Ladens"', CNN, 1/4/2003, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/31/iraq.egypt.mubarak.reut/>, accessed 21/4/2012.

⁵⁰ A Human Rights Watch report states: 'The practice of rendering wanted persons to Egypt and other countries in the region, despite the high risk that they will be subjected to torture, dates back to the mid-1990s.' See *Black Hole: The Fate of Islamists Rendered to Egypt*, Human Rights Watch, 10/5/2005, at <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2005/05/09/black-hole>, accessed 21/10/2011.

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2003. While the speech addressed the theme of broader regional political reform, a result of the Administration's perception of the Middle East's 'democratic deficit' as the root cause of the events of September 11, Egypt was mentioned explicitly alongside other Arab countries. G. W. Bush stated: 'The great and proud nation of Egypt has shown the way toward peace in the Middle East, and now should show the way toward democracy in the Middle East. Champions of democracy in the region understand that democracy is not perfect, it is not the path to utopia, but it's the only path to national success and dignity.'⁵¹ This argument was based on the premise of Egypt's traditional role as a leading Arab state, an exemplar in the broader region. Its position as a staunch, long-standing US ally meant that the onus placed on it by G. W. Bush to initiate political reform indicated a potentially significant change in the dynamics of the US-Egyptian relationship. This message was underscored in Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's speech at the American University in Cairo in 2005. She stated emphatically that: 'For 60 years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region here in the Middle East, and we achieved neither. Now we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people.'⁵² Making specific reference to Egypt, Rice argued that:

The Egyptian government must fulfill the promise it has made to its people – and to the entire world – by giving its citizens the freedom to choose. Egypt's elections, including the Parliamentary elections, must meet objective standards that define every free election. Opposition groups must be free to assemble, and participate, and speak to the media. Voting should occur without violence or intimidation. And international election monitors and observers must have unrestricted access to do their jobs.⁵³

The tone of this speech was unprecedented in its forcefulness and reaffirmed expectations that US policy to Egypt, as well as the broader Middle East, would undergo significant changes in the years ahead.

⁵¹ Bush, G. W., 'Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy', 6/11/2003, at <http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary>, accessed 17/12/2012.

⁵² Rice, C., 'Remarks of Secretary of State at the American University of Cairo', 20/6/2005, at <http://merln.ndu.edu/archivepdf/NEA/State/48328.pdf>, accessed 23/8/2012.

⁵³ Ibid.

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These statements by senior G. W. Bush administration officials were accompanied by explicit, public criticisms of the Mubarak government. This proved to be one of the Administration's most effective instruments, utilised mainly in response to the Egyptian government's treatment of civil society and political dissent. For example in 2002, G. W. Bush highlighted the case of Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a liberal-secular human rights activist imprisoned for receiving EU funds and defaming Egypt abroad. G. W. Bush subsequently refused to extend additional financial assistance to Egypt, a move described by Tom Malinowski of Human Rights Watch as '[potentially] the most significant step the United States has ever taken to defend human rights in the Arab world.'⁵⁴ While this was largely symbolic, as the existing \$2 billion in annual economic and military assistance continued, it was nonetheless a significant gesture. Another example was that of Ayman Nour, a member of the Egyptian Parliament and founder of the liberal-secular opposition Al-Ghad party. After his arrest in 2005, on charges widely regarded as politically motivated, Rice abruptly cancelled a scheduled visit to Egypt and suspended discussions on a Free Trade Agreement.⁵⁵ Through publicly highlighting individual cases such as the above, the G. W. Bush administration drew international attention to Egyptian civil society as a whole, offering it a measure of protection from overt repression. This was accompanied by broader changes in the US government's stance towards Egypt; for instance the US Congress established a significant precedent in 2004 with the Brownback amendment, which ensured that democracy promotion funds in Egypt were henceforth administered solely by USAID, with the Egyptian government no longer having input on their dispensation.

As with the Clinton administration, the G. W. Bush administration's strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East emphasised the integral role of civil society. This was reflected in significant increases in funding for democracy promotion programs in Egypt, as elsewhere, under which support for civil society was prioritised. In many cases these funds augmented existing programs established by the Clinton administration, although new regional initiatives such as the Middle

⁵⁴ Malinowski, T., cited in Slevin, P., 'Bush, in Shift on Egypt, Links New Aid to Rights', *Washington Post*, 15/8/2002, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A19561-2002Aug14?language=printer>, accessed 19/9/2011.

⁵⁵ Kessler, G., 'Rice Drops Plans for Visit to Egypt', *Washington Post*, 26/2/2005, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A54613-2005Feb25.html>, accessed 8/9/2011.

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East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) initiative were also introduced.⁵⁶ Both MEPI and BMENA evidence the G. W. Bush administration's strategic emphasis on civil society, as they were devised with the specific intention of cultivating civil society in the region, in the belief that 'reform in the GME [Greater Middle East] must be driven internally.'⁵⁷ In the case of Egypt, Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick claimed that: '[MEPI and BMENA] support the home-grown efforts... to build the institutions of an operating democracy.'⁵⁸ These official US initiatives were accompanied by the work of various non-governmental organisations. They included the NED, which distributed grants for a wide range of projects in Egypt, implemented by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), the Solidarity Center, Freedom House, the Egyptian Democracy Institute (EDI), and the Egyptian Center for Human Rights (ECHR) amongst others.⁵⁹ For instance the NDI 'assisted civil society organizations to conduct the first officially-sanctioned election observation in Egypt for the presidential and parliamentary elections [of 2005].'⁶⁰ The IRI provided training and assistance to political parties and civil society organisations, and facilitated 'exchange visits for Egyptian activists to see firsthand working models of political participation and the role of civil society in elections.'⁶¹ A final example is Freedom House, which sought to 'empower' Egyptian reform advocates through its civil society support program.⁶² Following an exchange visit to the US, it claimed: 'Egyptian visiting fellows from all

⁵⁶ See Chapter Three for a detailed analysis of these initiatives.

⁵⁷ 'G-8 Greater Middle East Partnership', 13/2/2004, at <http://www.albab.com/arab/docs/international/gmep2004.htm>, accessed 20/8/2012.

⁵⁸ Zoellick, R., 'Q&As Following Meeting with Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs About Gheit', 13/7/2005, cited in 'Egypt', Sourcewatch, at <http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Egypt>, accessed 26/9/2011.

⁵⁹ For a comprehensive list of the NED's grant recipients in Egypt, see 'Annual Reports', National Endowment for Democracy, at <http://www.ned.org>, accessed 24/10/2011.

⁶⁰ 'Egypt', National Democratic Institute, at <http://www.ndi.org/Egypt>, accessed 24/10/2011.

⁶¹ 'Egypt', International Republican Institute, at <http://www.iri.org/countries-and-programs/middle-east-and-north-africa/Egypt>, accessed 24/10/2011.

⁶² Freedom House listed its activities in support of Egyptian civil society as follows: 'Promoting exchange of experience between democracy advocates in Egypt and in established and emerging democracies to share best practices and foster transnational solidarity. Providing advanced training on civic mobilization, strategic thinking, new media, advocacy and outreach. Professionalizing civil society to monitor, document and report on human rights cases and advocate for legal reform... [and engaging] the policy-making community and public in critically assessing the state of freedom through media and other outreach initiatives and public and private forums.' See 'New Generation of Advocates: Empowering Civil Society in Egypt', Freedom House, at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=66&program=84>, accessed 24/10/2011.

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civil society groups received unprecedented attention and recognition, including meetings in Washington with US Secretary of State, the National Security Advisor, and prominent members of Congress.⁶³ Condoleezza Rice herself described the visiting fellows as representing ‘hope for the future of Egypt.’⁶⁴

The above demonstrate the extent to which the US government’s official efforts to promote political, economic, social and cultural reform in Egypt – in the national interest – are supplemented by the non-governmental sector. The NDI, IRI and Freedom House are all listed explicitly, amongst others, in the US Embassy’s confidential democracy strategy of 2007, which claimed to serve as ‘the basis for our democracy promotion efforts in Egypt.’⁶⁵ With an annual budget of \$5 million, the strategy outlined the US Embassy’s intention to support the IRI’s efforts to assist the development of ‘emerging [political] leaders’ and ‘reform-minded NGOs’ in preparation for parliamentary elections in 2010 and the presidential election in 2011; the NDI’s training of municipal candidates and campaign managers, particularly women, for the 2008 municipal elections, as well as its efforts to build the ‘capacity of civil society organizations in election and governance monitoring’; and finally Freedom House’s ‘off-shore human rights activities’, which could include amongst others ‘training for bloggers, assistance to human rights lawyers, international coalition building with civil society, and off-shore civic education.’⁶⁶

It is important to emphasise here that the civil society organisations supported through US governmental and non-governmental efforts, as part of the strategy of democracy promotion, are inherently partisan. Conforming to the boundaries of the promoted liberal democratic ideology, which they are broadly supportive of, they do not provide an accurate representation of either the Egyptian political spectrum or wider Egyptian society. This was reflected in a meeting held in Cairo by Secretary of State Rice with various members of civil society in February 2006. All of the participants selected were English-speakers, and most represented liberal-secular

⁶³ ‘New Generation of Advocates: Empowering Civil Society in Egypt’.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Jones, S., ‘Egypt: Updated Democracy Strategy’, US Embassy in Egypt, 9/10/2007, at <http://www.aftenposten.no/spesial/wikileaksdokumenter/article4008796.ece#>. T0ALVIGzfap, accessed 24/8/2012.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

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political movements.⁶⁷ They included: ‘a close associate of imprisoned opposition leader Ayman Nour, the Egyptian head of the American Chamber of Commerce, business people, intellectuals and academics.’⁶⁸ Crucially the Muslim Brotherhood, in effect the largest opposition movement in Egypt, was not represented.⁶⁹ As Rice commented in 2005:

We have not had contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood. Our goal here is to encourage the Egyptian Government, within its own laws and hopefully within a process and a context that is ever more reforming, to engage with civil society, with the people of Egypt for elections that can be free and fair. But we have not engaged the Muslim Brotherhood and we don't – we won't.⁷⁰

The concept of ‘organic intellectuals’ emphasised in Gramscian theory is of relevance here. As Enrico Augelli and Craig Murphy suggest, intellectuals serve to represent the ideas that hegemony comprises, providing ‘intellectual and moral support for the hegemon’s dominant political role.’⁷¹ US strategy is reliant on such individuals and organisations for the legitimisation of its promoted ideology. One example is the aforementioned Saad Eddin Ibrahim, founder of the Ibn Khaldun Center. As a leading liberal-secular, Egyptian-American civil society activist, he has ‘supported fair elections when they were viewed as incompatible with Egyptian politics, promoted international democratic alliances, and accepted NGO funding from any source that shares peaceful and democratic values, including those in the US.’⁷² In short Ibrahim broadly supports, and in the process legitimises within sections of Egyptian society, the ideology articulated by the US. The US has long supported such individuals and organisations in its efforts to promote democracy

⁶⁷ ‘Egypt Liberals to Rice: Mubarak Stifles Secularists’, *Reuters*, 22/2/2006, at http://www.redorbit.com/news/international/401681/egypt_liberals_to_rice_mubarak_stifles_secularists/index.html, accessed 22/10/2011.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ See Rice, C., ‘US State Department Question and Answer at the American University in Cairo’, 20/5/2005, at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0506/S00328/rice-qa-at-the-american-university-in-cairo.htm>, accessed 24/8/2012.

⁷¹ Augelli, E., Murphy, C., ‘Gramsci and International Relations: A General Perspective and Example from Recent US Policy Toward the Third World’, in Gill, S., (ed.), *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 131.

⁷² ‘Saadeddine Ibrahim, Founder and Director of the Ibn Khaldoun Center Egypt’, at https://www.csidonline.org/9th_annual_conf/Saadeddine_Ibrahim_bio_abstract.pdf, accessed 22/10/2011.

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around the world, to the exclusion of alternative, contesting voices.⁷³

The scope and depth of the US strategy of democracy promotion in Egypt under G. W. Bush is illustrated in a confidential US diplomatic cable. Ambassador Francis Ricciardone outlined the ‘Next Steps for Advancing Democracy in Egypt’ in early 2006.⁷⁴ He claimed that:

We do not have a silver bullet, but we can press reforms that will lead, inexorably, to the “death by 1000 cuts” of Egypt’s authoritarian system. There will be no “Orange Revolution on the Nile” on Mubarak’s watch, but we must aim to consolidate each modest democratic advance. A steady, incremental approach will continue to stretch Egypt toward a democratic future.⁷⁵

The proposals addressed a range of fronts. The political front included ‘[broadening] our diplomatic strategy to build support for the democracy agenda among regime elites, including the First Lady’ and ‘influencing the narrow group of individuals that surround [Mubarak].’⁷⁶ On the economic front, emphasis was placed on ‘[ensuring] the political success of the economic reform program’ and ‘[recognizing] that economic reforms complement democratic reform’, with a view to ‘[revitalizing] the Free Trade Agreement.’⁷⁷ On the military front, Ricciardone claimed that:

we need to define the linkages between our military assistance program and Egypt’s progress towards representative government. At a minimum, this review should expand IMET [International Military Education and Training] programs – the most purposefully “transformative” form of U.S. military assistance – to bring more Egyptian officers for training in the United

⁷³ This was reflected in a confidential diplomatic cable from the US Embassy in Cairo, which states: ‘The Ibn Khaldun Center and others produced impressive results on domestic monitoring during the parliamentary elections and merit continued support.’ See Ricciardone, F., ‘Next Steps for Advancing Democracy in Egypt’, US Embassy in Egypt, 6/3/2006, at <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9135>, accessed 24/8/2012.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Ian Traynor details the US’s involvement in the ‘Orange Revolution’ of Ukraine in 2004-5, as well as previous democratic transitions in Serbia and Georgia. See Traynor, I., ‘US Campaign Behind the Turmoil in Kiev’, *Guardian*, 26/11/2004, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/nov/26/Ukraine.usa>, accessed 24/8/2012.

⁷⁶ Ricciardone, ‘Next Steps for Advancing Democracy in Egypt’.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

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States.⁷⁸

The rationale was to ‘at least begin planting the seeds of transformation within the military.’⁷⁹ In terms of the official US reform initiatives, ‘[continuing US government] support through USAID and MEPI to Egyptian civil society’ was advocated, while the work of the non-governmental sector was also addressed, namely ‘[continuing] to help the legal political parties through IRI and NDI, with a focus on the ruling NDP’, and ‘[proceeding] with supporting additional engagement on Egypt by additional international NGOs such as Transparency International, Freedom House, and the American Bar Association.’⁸⁰ The above demonstrate the extent of the intervention implemented through the strategy of democracy promotion in Egypt, which incorporated political, diplomatic, military, economic and social policies. This arguably conforms with William Robinson’s earlier assertion that: ‘divested of the rhetoric, the “democracy promotion” programs in the Philippines, Chile, Nicaragua, Haiti, and elsewhere were, in fact, large-scale political operations in foreign policy.’⁸¹ These policies collectively constituted an attempt to facilitate the US’s ‘fundamental reform goal in Egypt’, namely ‘a stable, democratic and legitimate transition to the post-Mubarak era.’⁸²

The G. W. Bush administration’s approach towards Egypt, in terms of its public statements, criticisms and democracy promotion initiatives, reflected developments occurring on the ground. One of the most interesting was the emergence of Kefaya (‘Enough’) in 2004, a popular social movement that broadly called for change in Egypt.⁸³ Positioned against the hereditary transfer of power from Hosni Mubarak to his son Gamal, it also opposed political corruption, state repression and human rights abuses. Kefaya represented an important development in an already vibrant tradition of Egyptian civil society. As a result there were some positive correlations between the US’s reform impetus and domestic Egyptian politics. Bahey El Din Hassan, Director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, argued that the G. W. Bush

⁷⁸ Ricciardone, ‘Next Steps for Advancing Democracy in Egypt’.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Robinson, W., *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 79.

⁸² Jones, ‘Egypt: Updated Democracy Strategy’.

⁸³ Manar Shorbagy describes Kefaya as ‘a movement of a new kind that is creating a distinctive and promising form of politics for Egypt.’ See Shorbagy, M., ‘The Egyptian Movement for Change - Kefaya: Redefining Politics in Egypt’, *Public Culture*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2007, p. 175.

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administration's push for reform in 2004-5 was critical in opening up political space in Egypt. He claimed that: '[US] pressure for democratisation and respect of human rights... made a positive contribution to the situation'.⁸⁴ He argued that this was achieved by highlighting the repression of civil society actors, subjecting Arab rulers such as Mubarak to a public critique of their records, and encouraging the emergence of an independent press in Egypt.⁸⁵ This is supported by Katerina Dalacoura, who states that: 'US democracy policies – or at least the rhetoric – caused unprecedented debate in the Middle East as commentators and activists began to argue the need for and possible direction of reform.'⁸⁶ She claims that in Egypt this resulted in 'a brief and narrow opening of political space... as the Mubarak regime realized it had to respond to growing US pressure for reform.'⁸⁷ Thus after Rice cancelled a scheduled visit to Cairo in February 2005, in response to the Egyptian government's perceived intransigence and the arrest of Ayman Nour, Mubarak unexpectedly announced a reform of the Egyptian constitution.⁸⁸ This allowed for multi-candidate presidential elections for the first time in the country's history.⁸⁹ Mubarak claimed that this reflected his 'full conviction of the need to consolidate efforts for more freedom and democracy.'⁹⁰ It constituted a shrewd pre-emptive move on his part, conducted with the intention of neutralising domestic but particularly external demands for substantive political reform.⁹¹

Presidential elections were subsequently held in September 2005, with Mubarak winning 88% of the vote, the relatively low turnout (14-23%) indicative of the widely held perception that this was not likely to be a free or fair contest.

⁸⁴ Author's interview with Bahey El Din Hassan, Director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Cairo, Egypt, 26/8/2010.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Dalacoura, K., 'US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: Competing Conceptions of Democracy', Millennium Annual Conference, 25-26/10/2008.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Kessler, 'Rice Drops Plans for Visit to Egypt'.

⁸⁹ Hisham Kassem, the publisher of Egypt's only independent daily newspaper *Al-Masry Al-Youm* and a member of the Al-Ghad party, claimed: 'It's the most important thing... [Mubarak] has done in 24 years in power.' Kassem, H., cited in Williams, D., 'Egyptian President Says He Will Push Multiparty Elections', *Washington Post*, 27/2/2005, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A56470-2005Feb26.html>, accessed 8/9/2011.

⁹⁰ Mubarak, H., cited in Ibid.

⁹¹ Margaret Scobey, Ambassador to Egypt, offered a unique assessment of Mubarak: 'He is a tried and true realist, innately cautious and conservative, and has little time for idealistic goals. Mubarak viewed President Bush (43) as naive, controlled by subordinates, and totally unprepared for dealing with post-Saddam Iraq, especially the rise of Iran's regional influence.' See Scobey, 'Scenesetter: President Mubarak's Visit to Washington'.

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Nonetheless it was important in terms of establishing a precedent, however tenuous, in Egyptian domestic politics.⁹² As Joe Stork of Human Rights Watch stated: ‘The significance of this election isn’t the possibility of unseating Mubarak, but the fact that many Egyptians have boldly challenged his quarter-century of rule. Their willingness to speak out has generated a serious public debate instead of just another presidential plebiscite.’⁹³ This was followed in November 2005 by elections for the Egyptian Parliament. While not considered a free election by international standards, the widespread fraud and manipulation that characterised previous elections did not take place, a result of domestic but particularly external pressure.⁹⁴ The Muslim Brotherhood subsequently won a record 88 seats in the 454-seat People’s Assembly, nearly a fifth, and almost six times the number it previously held. However flawed, these elections were important in terms of habituating Egyptian citizens in the procedures of Western liberal democratic systems, whereby institutional arrangements such as periodic elections constitute the primary source of legitimacy. Through MEPI, the G. W. Bush administration had supported the Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM), ‘a coalition of Egyptian NGOs under the leadership of the Ibn Khaldun Center’, which deployed around 5,000 electoral observers to polling stations across Egypt.⁹⁵ The NDI and IRI ‘conducted pre-election assessments and training programs’ for these electoral observers, with funding provided by USAID and MEPI.⁹⁶ This can be seen as an attempt to provide Egyptian civil society with the means and experience to eventually hold the Mubarak government accountable. Leslie Campbell, NDI’s regional director for the Middle East, argued that: ‘The single act of funding and training domestic monitors had

⁹² Sean McCormack, spokesperson for the State Department, claimed: ‘these elections really mark a historic departure for Egypt, in the fact that you have multicandidate presidential elections. I think it’s safe to say that Egyptians have not seen a presidential election like the one they have just seen in their lifetimes.’ McCormack, S., cited in Williams, D., Wright, R., ‘Mubarak poised to claim vote landslide’, *Washington Post*, 9/9/2005, at http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2005/09/09/mubarak_poised_to_claim_vote_landslide/, accessed 24/8/2012.

⁹³ ‘Egypt: Election Offers Public Debate, Not Free Choice’, Human Rights Watch, 1/9/2005, at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2005/09/01/egypt-election-offers-public-debate-not-free-choice>, accessed 13/9/2010.

⁹⁴ For instance Rice demanded that both the Egyptian presidential and parliamentary contests ‘meet objective standards that define every free election.’ See Rice, ‘Remarks of Secretary of State at the American University of Cairo’. G. W. Bush had called for the earlier presidential elections to ‘proceed with international monitors and with rules that allow for a real campaign,’ the Mubarak government rejecting the former as a violation of national sovereignty. See Sharp, J., ‘Egypt: 2005 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections’, *CRS Report for Congress*, 21/9/2005, p. 1.

⁹⁵ ‘Engaging Civil Society’, MEPI, at <http://mepi.state.gov/mepi/english-mepi/what-we-do/encouraging-participatory-politics/engaging-civil-society.html>, accessed 29/9/2011.

⁹⁶ Sharp, ‘Egypt: 2005 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections’, p. 5.

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undermined one of official Egypt's longest-standing fictions – that the people of Egypt were, by and large, happy with their leaders and their policies.⁹⁷

The unprecedented success of the Muslim Brotherhood raised its profile as a viable opposition movement, hinting towards the very real possibility of an Islamist party eventually assuming power democratically in the Middle East. This was in fact realised shortly afterwards in the January 2006 elections in the Palestinian Territories.⁹⁸ Hamas, an Islamist group classified as a terrorist organisation by the US and the EU, won in elections widely acclaimed as free and fair.⁹⁹ The fact that both the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas have traditionally adopted stridently anti-Western postures led to fears that, by encouraging political reform in the Middle East, the US might aid parties fundamentally opposed to its interests.¹⁰⁰ This also reflected a more fundamental concern though, that of a rival ideology in the form of political Islamism. As Adam Shatz argues: 'Islamism has provided the Arabs with an idiom of resistance, one with an even stronger claim to cultural authenticity than secular nationalism.'¹⁰¹ He notes that Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, leader of the democratically-elected Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, and Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of the Islamist Hezbollah in Lebanon, are 'folk heroes in Egypt.'¹⁰² Islamism offers one of the few viable alternatives to the ideology promoted by the US in the Middle East, and because of its grounding in the Islamic faith, also beyond its borders. Its potential to serve as a counter-hegemonic ideology has subsequently been regarded by successive American administrations, in particular since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism, as a

⁹⁷ Campbell, L., 'Party-Building in the Middle East', *International Journal*, Vol. 65, Issue 3, 2010, p. 574.

⁹⁸ This is discussed in Chapter Three.

⁹⁹ In response to their shared fear that Hamas may win the 2006 elections, Omar Suleiman, Director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Service, allegedly promised Amos Gilad, head of the Israeli Defense Ministry's Diplomatic-Security Bureau, that: 'There will be no elections in January. We will take care of it.' See Jones, R., 'Amb. Jones' 9/26 Meeting with Israeli MOD's Gilad Focuses on Egypt, Gaza, Hamas Activity and PA Elections', US Embassy in Israel, 27/9/2005, at <http://www.aftenposten.no/spesial/wikileaksdokumenter/article4021905.ece>, accessed 16/9/2011.

¹⁰⁰ Mohammed Habib, the Muslim Brotherhood's political director, stated: 'When Secretary Rice delivered her speech saying it was for too long they have been helping dictators, well, that was a good thing... This recognition was good for us.' Habib, M., cited in Lake, E., 'Déjà Vu in Cairo: Lessons from 2005', *The New Republic*, 1/2/2011, at <http://www.tnr.com/article/world/82456/egypt-riots-bush-mubarak>, accessed 22/10/2011.

¹⁰¹ Shatz, A., 'Whose Egypt?', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 5/1/2012, at <http://www.lrb.co.uk/2011/12/20/adam-shatz/whose-egypt>, accessed 18/2/2012.

¹⁰² Ibid.

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compelling threat.¹⁰³ Fawaz Gerges claims: ‘Security and strategic calculations lie behind Americans’ suspicion of Islamists. U.S. officials appear to view political Islam as a populist movement with historical roots similar to those of revolutionary third world nationalism. Washington has not been disposed toward populist third world groups and states.’¹⁰⁴ In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, this threat was arguably even more germane in the eyes of Western policy-makers. This was reflected with reference to the Muslim Brotherhood, in comments made by Ambassador Ricciardone in a confidential diplomatic cable:

We cannot engage directly with the Brotherhood, but we must urge the GOE [Government of Egypt] to find a formula that can co-opt, win over, or otherwise effectively thwart the direct threat of the Brotherhood. We have been trying to persuade influential Egyptians that the GOE/NDP tactics toward the MB [Muslim Brotherhood] (stop/start repression) is failing, and that they should confront the MB’s ideology head-on, with direct debate by articulate secularists.¹⁰⁵

The electoral successes of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas ultimately resulted in the ‘demotion’ of US democracy promotion efforts in Egypt and the wider region. Following 2006 there was a noticeable decrease in the G. W. Bush administration’s enthusiasm for expedited regional political reform.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps sensing this

¹⁰³ Leon Hadar argues that after the end of the Cold War, many in the American foreign policy establishment positioned political Islam as the ‘Green Peril’ - the new global threat following the death of communism. See Hadar, L., ‘What Green Peril?’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 2, 1993; Hadar, L., ‘The “Green Peril”: Creating the Islamic Fundamentalist Threat’, *Cato Policy Analysis*, No. 177, 27/8/1992, at <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa-177.html>, accessed 21/10/2012.

¹⁰⁴ Gerges, F., *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 78.

¹⁰⁵ Ricciardone, ‘Next Steps for Advancing Democracy in Egypt’. McCormack, the State Department’s spokesperson, argued in 2006 that: ‘the Muslim Brotherhood ... it is under the Egyptian Constitution that is a group that is not allowed to be. The Egyptian Constitution says that any – there should not be any political parties that are based on religion. That’s the Egyptian Constitution. Now in terms of how the Egyptian people organize themselves politically, that is for them to decide and for them to look at their laws and their constitution to decide whether or not they have it right.’ See McCormack, S., cited in El Amrani, I., ‘State Dept. Condemns Egypt Violence’, *The Arabist*, 12/5/2006, at <http://www.arabist.net/blog/2006/5/11/state-dept-condemns-egypt-violence.html>, accessed 13/10/2011.

¹⁰⁶ Behind the scenes US policy-makers were clearly aware of the public perception that the US reform initiative was losing impetus. A US Embassy briefing for Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick’s visit to Egypt stated: ‘[Zoellick’s] appearance with Arab League... [Secretary-General] Moussa will be an excellent venue to counter perceptions that the U.S. commitment to foster democracy is flagging.’ See Jones, S., ‘Scenesetter for Deputy Secretary Zoellick’s Visit to Egypt’, US Embassy in Egypt, 16/5/2006, at <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/11/28/world/20101128-cables-viewer.html#report/egypt-06CAIRO2933>, accessed 16/9/2011.

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trepidation, Mubarak launched a concerted effort to stymie any momentum that the reform initiative had gathered in the aftermath of the 2005 elections. Opposition parties, in particular the Muslim Brotherhood, a judges' reform movement and the press were all targets of sustained repression over the next few years.¹⁰⁷ The G. W. Bush administration's response to these events was relatively muted.¹⁰⁸ A number of explanations exist for this vacillation. First, the prospect of Islamist parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood assuming power democratically clearly played an important role. In the context of the post-September 11 international system, such an eventuality was undoubtedly considered particularly troubling by US policy-makers. Graham Fuller, a former vice-chair of the National Intelligence Council, argued: 'Islamist appreciation for the values of a democratic order has been most strengthened by the very reality that they themselves would be among the primary beneficiaries of it.'¹⁰⁹ As stated previously, the absence of viable political actors amenable to US interests has traditionally meant that authoritarian allies are likely to be maintained. The popular perception within US policy-making circles was that Egypt under Mubarak served as a relatively 'moderate' force in the Middle East, acting by and large in support of Western interests.¹¹⁰ This ultimately illustrates the narrow, cynical interpretation of 'democracy' held by US policy-makers.

¹⁰⁷ 'Editorial: The Crackdown in Cairo', *Washington Post*, 19/7/2006, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/18/AR2006071801565.html>, accessed 27/9/2011. As Amr Hamzawy notes, the NDP 'postponed local elections, extended the state of emergency, cracked down on protests, and acted indignant when the country's judges demanded independence for the judiciary.' See Hamzawy, A., 'Derailing Democratisation', *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 15-21/6/2006, at <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=18436>, accessed 27/9/2011.

¹⁰⁸ The State Department responded to the violent repression of protests in May 2006: 'We are deeply concerned by reports of Egyptian Government arrests and repression of demonstrators protesting election fraud and calling for an independent judiciary... We have noted our serious concern about the path of political reform and democracy in Egypt and actions such as these are incongruous with the Egyptian Government's professed commitment to increased political openness and dialogue within Egyptian society... Egypt is a good friend. Egypt is a good ally. We have a lot of common issues that we're working on together... That said, when there are issues that arise like we have seen today, we are going to speak out very plainly about them and that's what friends do.' See McCormack, S., cited in El Amrani, 'State Dept. Condemns Egypt Violence'.

¹⁰⁹ Fuller, G., 'Islamists in the Arab World: The Dance Around Democracy', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 49, (September) 2004, p. 7.

¹¹⁰ Mubarak persistently exploited this perception, a manipulation clearly recognised by some Western policy-makers. For instance Ambassador Ricciardone briefed Robert Mueller, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), before a scheduled visit to Cairo that: 'The Egyptians have a long history of threatening us with the MB bogeyman. Your counterparts may try to suggest that the President,s [sic] insistence on greater democracy in Egypt is somehow responsible for the MB,s [sic] electoral success. You should push back that, on the contrary, the MB,s [sic] rise signals the need for greater democracy and transparency in government.' See Ricciardone, F., 'Scenesetter for FBI Director Mueller's Visit to Egypt', US Embassy in Egypt, 29/11/2005, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/46311>, accessed 16/9/2011.

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A second factor was the escalating conflict in US-occupied Iraq which, amidst fears of a sectarian civil war, was reaching its height in 2006–7. Aside from prioritising the stabilisation of Iraq, in which Egypt assumed an important role, the ensuing destabilisation of the broader region meant that G. W. Bush administration was even more reluctant to alienate a key ally in Mubarak. As noted by the US Embassy in Egypt in 2006: '[Mubarak] remains deeply engaged in regional issues and continues to play an indispensable role on Israel/Palestine and Sudan, while helping also on Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.'¹¹¹ A final explanation may well be the G. W. Bush administration's gradual recognition of the danger posed to US interests by explicitly advocating an expedited regional strategy of reform in a highly volatile, strategic part of the world. This as opposed to the pursuit of a more cautious strategy. Previous instances of US democracy promotion in the Philippines, Chile and Nicaragua were limited to individual countries rather than addressing entire regions. This was raised in a report by the influential Council on Foreign Relations, which stated: 'promoting political, economic, and social change in the Arab world requires a country-by-country approach that recognizes the diversity of opportunities, challenges, and problems that exist in different countries.'¹¹² This was not the case, at least initially, with the G. W. Bush administration. Elizabeth Cheney, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, claimed that: 'We don't look at this as "where can we put pressure next?" It's more about the march of events across the region and how the U.S. can provide all assistance necessary to people who are working for change.'¹¹³ This reflects the G. W. Bush administration's misconstruction of the region as a monolithic entity, failing to account for its diversity, and the divergent interests of the various actors within it. The Administration's ambitions for reform in the Middle East thus exceeded its ability to actually implement it across the region.

¹¹¹ Jones, 'Scenesetter for Deputy Secretary Zoellick's Visit to Egypt'.

¹¹² *In Support of Arab Democracy: Why and How*, Council on Foreign Relations, Independent Task Force Report, No. 54, 2005, p. 14.

¹¹³ 'Interview with Elizabeth Cheney, U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs', *Arab Reform Bulletin*, 25/4/2005, at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2008/08/25/interview-with-elizabeth-cheney-u.s.-principal-deputy-assistant-secretary-of-state-for-near-eastern-affairs/rfa>, accessed 20/9/2011.

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Conclusion

Analyses of US democracy promotion in Egypt usually emphasise the efforts of the G. W. Bush administration, given the relatively high profile that political reform assumed under its leadership. As a result the earlier contributions of the Clinton administration are often ignored. But in many ways, it was Clinton's efforts which established the foundations upon which the post-September 11 impetus to democratise Egypt, as well as the broader Middle East, was built. Clinton's calls for economic reform and the strengthening of civil society established the basis for G. W. Bush's forthright demands for political reform in Egypt. Indeed they were incorporated into his own initiatives. Yet in the end, both administrations felt that the conditions for immediate political reform were not present. With other, more pressing issues such as the Arab-Israeli peace process and the conflict in Iraq, US interests in Egypt and the wider region were seen as best served by sustaining Mubarak's authoritarian government. Regardless, particularly under the G. W. Bush administration, 'a stable, democratic and legitimate transition to the post-Mubarak era' remained a fundamental aim of US strategy.¹¹⁴ This chapter has detailed the means by which the US sought to incrementally facilitate the conditions for such a transition in Egypt.

¹¹⁴ Jones, 'Egypt: Updated Democracy Strategy'.

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‘The advance of freedom in the Middle East requires freedom in Iraq. By helping Iraqis build a lasting democracy, we will spread the hope of liberty across a troubled region, and we’ll gain new allies in the cause of freedom. By helping Iraqis build a strong democracy, we’re adding to our own security, and, like a generation before us, we’re laying the foundation of peace for generations to come.’¹

– *President George W. Bush*

Introduction

Iraq is located at the heart of the Middle East, sharing borders with Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Its geographical position, abundant oil reserves, and relatively large population have long made it of central importance to US interests in the region.² The Iranian revolution of 1979, which signalled the end of Iran’s role as the US’s ‘regional policeman’, one of the ‘twin pillars’ of the US regional security system alongside Saudi Arabia, sharply heightened this importance. The US first began to augment its ties with Iraq under the Reagan administration, supporting it in the war against Iran. This pattern of engagement continued through the early years of the G. H. W. Bush administration, which sought to maintain Iraq as a counterbalance to Iran. But the nature of the US-Iraqi relationship changed irrevocably following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990. A US-led coalition, acting under the authority of UN Security Council resolution 678, forcibly expelled Iraq from Kuwaiti territory in 1991. As a result the following decade witnessed increasing tensions between the US and Iraq, with the Clinton administration pursuing a policy of ‘dual containment’ against both Iraq and Iran, in the case of the former explicitly advocating regime change. Ultimately this culminated in the invasion of Iraq under G. W. Bush in 2003, which precipitated the end of Saddam Hussein’s twenty-four year rule. It also led to a long-term American occupation of the country, amidst efforts to introduce ‘democracy’ to Iraq and the wider region.

¹ Bush, G. W., ‘The Struggle for Democracy in Iraq: Speech to the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia’, 12/12/2005, at <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/12.12.05.html>, accessed 23/11/2011.

² Toby Dodge claims: ‘Iraq’s importance to the stability of the Gulf and the wider Middle East area cannot be overestimated. Geographically, it sits on the eastern flank of the Arab Middle East, with Turkey and Iran as neighbours. With a population estimated by the World Bank in 2004 at 27.1 million, it has a greater demographic weight than any of the bordering Arab states. With oil reserves second only to Saudi Arabia, its economic importance is clearly global.’ See Dodge, T., *Iraq’s Future: The Aftermath of Regime Change*, Adelphi, 2005, p. 8.

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This chapter will argue that the US sought to encourage the emergence of elite-based democracy in Iraq, in the pursuit of hegemony and a transformation of the broader region. It will first address the US-Iraqi relationship since 1979, under the Reagan, G. H. W. Bush and Clinton administrations. The chapter will then analyse the G. W. Bush administration's approach to Iraq, in terms of the invasion and occupation, and specifically the array of economic, political and civil society reforms introduced as part of the effort to promote democracy in Iraq. Finally it will assess the extent to which the US strategy of democracy promotion in Iraq was successful or not.

Chapter Five

The US and Iraq: Relations in the Aftermath of 1979

The Reagan and G. H. W. Bush Administrations: 'An Alliance of Necessity'

The Iranian revolution of 1979 provided the catalyst for the development of the US-Iraqi relationship, in the same year that Saddam Hussein formally assumed power. Like the US-Egyptian relationship, which was founded on Israeli-Egyptian rapprochement, it was an external interest that spurred the US to nurture relations with Iraq; namely undermining the revolutionary theocratic government of Ayatollah Khomeini.³ This motivation was shared by Hussein, who feared the influence of Iran's Shiite Islamic doctrine on Iraqi Shias, who formed the majority of Iraq's population. In 1980 Hussein launched a pre-emptive attack against Iran in an attempt to displace Khomeini and position Iraq as the dominant power in the Persian Gulf. President Reagan outlined measures in support of Iraq in a secret National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) as early as 1982, despite maintaining a stance of neutrality in public.⁴ Reagan also removed Iraq from the State Departments' list of sponsors of terrorism, apparently without Congressional approval.⁵ Chip Gagnon argues: 'This shift marked the beginning of a very close relationship between the Reagan and Bush administrations and Saddam Hussein. The US over following years actively supported Iraq, supplying billions of dollars of credits, US military intelligence and advice, and ensuring that necessary weaponry got to Iraq.'⁶ Patrick Tyler outlines Reagan and his Vice President G. H. W. Bush's support of a highly classified program, 'in which more than 60 officers of the Defense Intelligence Agency were secretly providing detailed information on Iranian deployments,

³ The US has viewed Iran as one of the primary threats to regional stability since 1979. This is mainly because of Iran's aggressive foreign policy, which includes the sponsorship of militant Islamist organisations such as Hamas and Hezbollah, the explicit aim of exporting its revolutionary Shiite Islamic doctrine abroad, and a generally hostile stance towards the West, reflected in its steadfast opposition to the US-sponsored Middle East peace process for instance. In recent years Iran's pursuit of nuclear power has emerged as one of the US's paramount concerns in the region.

⁴ Former NSC official Howard Teicher claims that: 'In June, 1982, President Reagan decided that the United States could not afford to allow Iraq to lose the war to Iran. President Reagan decided that the United States would do whatever was necessary and legal to prevent Iraq from losing the war with Iran. President Reagan formalized this policy by issuing a... [NSDD] to this effect in June, 1982... The NSDD, including even its indentifying number, is classified.' See 'The Teicher Affidavit: Iraq-Gate', 31/1/1995, at <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article1413.htm>, accessed 27/8/2012.

⁵ Freudenheim, M., Slavin, B., Rhoden, W., 'The World In Summary; Readjustments In the Mideast', *New York Times*, 28/2/1982, at <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/02/28/weekinreview/the-world-in-summary-readjustments-in-the-mideast.html>, accessed 28/11/2011.

⁶ Gagnon, C., 'Our History with Iraq', 22/12/2002, at <http://www.ithaca.edu/gagnon/talks/us-iraq.htm>, accessed 28/11/2011.

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tactical planning for battles, plans for airstrikes and bomb-damage assessments for Iraq.⁷ Tyler states that:

Col. Walter P. Lang, retired, the senior defense intelligence officer at the time... [argued] that both D.I.A. [Defense Intelligence Agency] and C.I.A. [Central Intelligence Agency] officials “were desperate to make sure that Iraq did not lose” to Iran... What Mr. Reagan’s aides were concerned about, he said, was that Iran not break through to the Fao Peninsula and spread the Islamic revolution to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.⁸

In the face of Iranian advances, US support ultimately prevented an Iraqi defeat.⁹ It also helped ensure a protracted war of attrition that lasted until 1988, the longest conventional war of the twentieth century, with estimated casualties for both sides ranging from 500,000 to 1.5 million.

The US and Iraq maintained relatively positive relations in the immediate aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war. In 1989 for example, President G. H. W. Bush argued that normalised relations with Iraq would serve long-term US interests in the region, and called for the provision of ‘economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behaviour and to increase... [US] influence.’¹⁰ This was accompanied by the export of advanced technologies to Iraq, allegedly used in its non-conventional weapons programmes, as well as \$1 billion in agricultural loan guarantees.¹¹ In August 1990 however, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait in an attempt to annex it. This was motivated by various factors, including a loose historical claim to Kuwait as part of Ottoman-

⁷ Tyler, P., ‘Officers Say U.S. Aided Iraq in War Despite Use of Gas’, *New York Times*, 18/8/2002, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/18/world/officers-say-us-aided-iraq-in-war-despite-use-of-gas.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>, accessed 29/11/2011.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ US support of Iraq was outlined in NSDD 139: ‘The Secretary of State, in coordination with the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence, will prepare a plan of action designed to avert an Iraqi collapse. The plan of action should include: An evaluation of Iraqi military needs and measures which could be taken to facilitate indirect security assistance (e.g., from Egypt) and to provide enhanced intelligence analysis and advice, which will bolster Iraqi defenses. Approaches to friendly states (e.g., France and Jordan) capable of providing overt and covert military support to Iraq.’ See NSC, ‘Measures to Improve U.S. Posture and Readiness to Respond to Developments in the Iran-Iraq War’, NSDD 139, 5/4/1984, at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-139.pdf>, accessed 27/8/2012.

¹⁰ NSC, ‘U.S. Policy Toward the Persian Gulf’, NSD 26, 2/10/1989, at <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd26.pdf>, accessed 29/11/2011.

¹¹ Hurd, N., ‘U.S. Diplomatic and Commercial Relationships with Iraq, 1980 - 2 August 1990’, *CASI*, 15/7/2000, at <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/usdocs/usiraq80s90s.html>, accessed 30/1/2012.

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era Iraq, its substantial oil reserves, and an Iraqi debt of approximately \$60 billion incurred during the conflict with Iran. The invasion and subsequent occupation of Kuwait marked a watershed in US-Iraqi relations. President G. H. W. Bush called for ‘the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait.’¹² In January 1991, after months of diplomatic wrangling, a US-led coalition expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait and reinstated the monarchy, the House of Al-Sabah. Yet G. H. W. Bush was reluctant to commit US forces to enter Iraq and overthrow Hussein, primarily for fear of further undermining regional stability; this despite an ill-fated rebellion launched by Iraqi Shias and Kurds in southern and northern Iraq.¹³ Iran was also an important consideration in this decision. As Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the conflict elaborates: ‘our practical intention was to leave Baghdad enough power to survive as a threat to an Iran that remained bitterly hostile toward the United States.’¹⁴

The Clinton Administration: Containment & Regime Change in Iraq

The Clinton administration came to power following the Persian Gulf War, the first major conflict of the post-Cold War era. This had been hailed as a defining moment in the emergent unipolar system, a test of the US’s predominant position in the ‘new world order.’¹⁵ But the lack of a definitive end to the conflict, amidst Hussein’s continued intransigence towards the West, meant Iraq remained a central concern for the US, serving as one of its primary antagonists in the region over the following decade. The Clinton administration opted to pursue the ‘dual containment’ of Iraq alongside Iran, replacing the previous strategy of ‘balancing’ one against the other

¹² NSC, ‘U.S. Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait’, NSD 45, 20/8/1990, at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB39/document2.pdf>, accessed 29/11/2011.

¹³ Jane Mayer claims that: ‘In May, 1991, President George H. W. Bush signed a covert “lethal finding” that authorized the C.I.A. to spend a hundred million dollars to “create the conditions for removal of Saddam Hussein from power.” Robert Baer, a former C.I.A. officer who was assigned to Iraq at the time, said that the policy was all show, “like an ape beating its chest. No one had any expectation of marching into Baghdad and killing Saddam. It was an impossibility.” Nonetheless, the C.I.A. had received an influx of cash, and it decided to create an external opposition movement to Saddam.’ This task was contracted out to the Rendon Group, which created the Iraqi National Congress (INC), headed by Ahmed Chalabi. See Mayer, J., ‘The Manipulator’, *New Yorker*, 7/6/2004, at http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/06/07/040607fa_fact1?currentPage=all, accessed 11/1/2012.

¹⁴ Powell, C., cited in O’Sullivan, C., *Colin Powell: A Political Biography*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2010, p. 90.

¹⁵ Bush, G. H. W., ‘President George Bush Announcing War Against Iraq’, 16/1/1991, at <http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/bush-war.htm>, accessed 28/8/2012.

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with their mutual isolation.¹⁶ In the case of Iraq, this was enforced through an array of sanctions introduced in the aftermath of its invasion of Kuwait, as well as the use of occasional military force. For example when Iraq announced that it would no longer cooperate with UN weapons inspectors in 1998, the US and the UK targeted 'Iraq's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs and its military capacity to threaten its neighbors.'¹⁷ Nonetheless, as David Saltiel and Jason Purcell argue, overall the policy of dual containment was 'inconsistent and ineffective', particular so with respect to Iran.¹⁸

Despite explicitly linking Iraq and Iran within the policy of dual containment, in practice the Clinton administration differentiated between the two. Martin Indyk, special assistant to the President for Near East and South Asian affairs and the policy's main architect, stated: 'Dual containment does not mean duplicate containment... each regime presents different challenges to our interests, and we have developed policies to deal with the specific cases.'¹⁹ This was particularly evident with regard to the question of regime change. In contrast to its policy towards Iran, which sought to reform the government, the Clinton administration actively sought to replace Hussein. Indyk claimed the intention was 'to establish clearly and unequivocally that the current regime in Iraq is a criminal regime, beyond the pale of international society and, in our judgment, irredeemable.'²⁰ An emergent consensus on regime change in Iraq within the US policy-making community was reflected in a call for Hussein's removal from prominent members of the neoconservative movement, many of whom later assumed key roles in the G. W. Bush administration.²¹ In a public letter to President Clinton in 1996, signatories such as

¹⁶ Gause, F. G., 'The Illogic of Dual Containment', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2, 1994, p. 56.

¹⁷ Clinton, W. J., 'President Clinton Explains Iraq Strike', 16/12/1998, at http://articles.cnn.com/1998-12-16/politics/1998_12_16_transcripts_clinton_1_saddam-hussein-unscom-iraq-strike?_s=PM:ALL POLITICS, accessed 10/12/2011.

¹⁸ This was primarily because of the constraints the policy imposed on the US's ability to respond to the election of the 'reformist' candidate Mohamed Khatami to the Iranian presidency. Critics of dual containment called instead for a policy of constructive engagement. See Saltiel, D., Purcell, J., 'Moving Past Dual Containment: Iran, Iraq, and the Future of U.S. Policy in the Gulf', *Stanley Foundation Policy Bulletin*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, (January) 2002, p. 2.

¹⁹ Indyk, M., cited in Indyk, M., Fuller, G., Cordesman, A., Marr, P., 'Symposium on Dual Containment: U.S. Policy Toward Iran and Iraq', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. III, No. 1, 1994, p. 3.

²⁰ Indyk, M., cited in Litwak, R., *Rogue States and U.S. Foreign Policy: Containment After the Cold War*, Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000, p. 59.

²¹ The neoconservative movement emerged during the 1970s, originating from 'former liberals and leftists who were dismayed by the countercultural movements of the 1960s and the Great Society, and

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Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Paula Dobriansky, Elliot Abrams, Zalmay Khalilzad, and Richard Perle argued that:

The policy of “containment” of Saddam Hussein has been steadily eroding over the past several months... The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. That now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy.²²

Regime change and democratisation in Iraq became the official policy of the US with the passing of the Iraq Liberation Act in October 1998.²³ The statement made by the US Congress was unequivocal: ‘It should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime.’²⁴ This followed an earlier measure ratified by Clinton, which made ‘\$5,000,000 available for assistance to the Iraqi democratic opposition for such activities as organization, training, communication and dissemination of information, developing and implementing agreements among opposition groups, compiling information to

adopted conservative views, for example, against government welfare programs.’ See Drew, E., ‘The Neocons in Power’, *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 50, No. 10, 12/6/2003. While initially focused on domestic issues, neoconservatives became increasingly defined by their intense opposition to the Soviet Union; rallying against communism, détente and utopian social engineering. After the end of the Cold War in 1991, they attached themselves with the same intensity to specific US foreign policy issues, most notably the promotion of democracy abroad.

²² ‘Letter to President Clinton on Iraq’, Project for the New American Century, 26/1/1998, at <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqlintonletter.htm>, accessed 10/12/2011.

²³ ‘Iraq Liberation Act of 1998’, House of Representatives, 31/10/1998, at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=105_cong_bills&docid=f:h4655enr.txt.pdf, accessed 10/12/2011. Ahmed Chalabi, head of the INC, claimed: ‘I followed very closely how Roosevelt, who abhorred the Nazis, at a time when isolationist sentiment was paramount in the United States, managed adroitly to persuade the American people to go to war. I studied it with a great deal of respect; we learned a lot from it. The Lend-Lease program committed Roosevelt to enter on Britain’s side – so we had the Iraq Liberation Act, which committed the American people for the liberation against Saddam.’ See Chalabi, A., cited in Mayer, ‘The Manipulator’. Mayer argues that: ‘Chalabi had lobbied tirelessly for the legislation... On October 7, 1998, the Iraq Liberation Act, which had been drafted by Trent Lott and other Republicans, passed in Congress almost unanimously. Chalabi, Brooke, and their allies in Congress crafted the legislation together.’ See Mayer, ‘The Manipulator’.

²⁴ ‘Iraq Liberation Act of 1998’.

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support the indictment of Iraqi officials for war crimes, and for related purposes.’²⁵

Yaniv Voller notes that:

Regime change in Iraq was to take place through domestic opposition groups. The designated groups included the PUK [Patriotic Union of Kurdistan], KDP [Kurdistan Democratic Party], and the IMK [Islamic Movement of Kurdistan], in addition to the Iraqi National Accord, the Movement for Constitutional Monarchy and the Shiite Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq.²⁶

These movements were all based outside Iraqi territory proper, either in the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region in the north, or in exile abroad. The NED also assumed a role in this, funding various public diplomacy or propaganda operations. Between 1991 and 2003, it awarded grants of \$260,000 for media and publishing projects related to Iraq, and \$430,000 for projects that included a media and publishing component.²⁷ Michael Barker describes the presence of a ‘US-funded “media war” in operation since the first Gulf War’, claiming that prior to the invasion of 2003 ‘at least 27 separate opposition radio stations were broadcasting into Iraq.’²⁸ Nonetheless democracy promotion was not ultimately a major feature of the Clinton administration’s policy to Iraq. Little if any democracy promotion actually took place within its borders. Civil society, the foundation of hegemony, was virtually non-existent in the country, while the US crucially lacked access to Iraqi society itself. The Clinton administration’s references to democratisation in Iraq were largely rhetorical, serving a domestic American audience rather than any concrete strategic objective in Iraq. Regime change was the primary emphasis, and while reference was made to a transition to democracy, this was largely on the basis that any alternative to Hussein was preferable.

²⁵ ‘Iraq Liberation Act of 1998’.

²⁶ Voller, Y., *From Rebellion to De Facto Statehood: International and Transnational Sources of the Transformation of the Kurdish National Liberation Movement in Iraq into the Kurdistan Regional Government*, PhD Dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012, p. 174.

²⁷ Barker, M., ‘Democracy or Polyarchy? US-Funded Media Developments in Afghanistan and Iraq Post 9/11’, *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 2008, p. 118.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

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The G. W. Bush Administration: Building ‘A Shining City on a Hill’ in Iraq

Regime Change: The Overthrow of Saddam Hussein

The launch of ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’ in March 2003 marked the culmination of over a decade of rising tensions between the US and Iraq. The invasion of Iraq itself was motivated by two principal factors. First, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which precipitated a radical change in US foreign policy, manifested in the Bush Doctrine’s assertion of the right to pre-emption. This was outlined in the National Security Strategy of 2002: ‘The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction – and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.’²⁹ As Alan Dowd argues: ‘the Bush Doctrine’s principle of pre-emption was tailor-made for Ba’athist Iraq – a country with growing ties to terror, an underground unconventional weapons programme, and the means and motives to mete out revenge on the United States.’³⁰ Second, the US had accorded the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction an increasingly high profile following September 11, designating Iraq, Iran and North Korea as part of an ‘axis of evil’.³¹ The G. W. Bush administration ultimately justified the invasion of Iraq by alleging ties to weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism.³² Paul Wolfowitz later stated: ‘The truth is that for reasons that have a lot to do with the U.S. government bureaucracy, we settled on the one issue that everyone could agree on which was weapons of mass destruction as the core reason [for going to war].’³³ But beyond these immediate factors, a number of other objectives underpinned the rationale for the invasion. These primarily related to the US’s desire to ensure its

²⁹ NSC, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (September) 2002, p. 15.

³⁰ Dowd, A., ‘Thirteen Years: The Causes and Consequences of the War in Iraq’, *Parameters*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3, (Autumn) 2003, p. 48.

³¹ These countries were identified as ‘state sponsors of terrorism that are pursuing or who have the potential to pursue weapons of mass destruction.’ See Bolton, J., ‘Beyond the Axis of Evil: Additional Threats From Weapons of Mass Destruction’, 6/5/2002, at <http://www.acronym.org.uk/docs/0205/doc01.htm>, accessed 29/8/2012. Libya, Syria and Cuba were later added to this list.

³² Both claims were subsequently disproved. See US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, ‘Postwar Findings about Iraq’s WMD Programs and Links to Terrorism and How they Compare with Prewar Assessments’, 8/9/2006, at <http://intelligence.senate.gov/phaseiiaccuracy.pdf>, accessed 13/7/2010.

³³ Wolfowitz, P., cited in ‘Wolfowitz Comments Revive Doubts Over Iraq’s WMD’, *USA Today*, 30/5/2003, at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2003-05-30-wolfowitz-iraq_x.htm, accessed 28/1/2012.

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core interests in the region – access to oil and the security of Israel. The G. W. Bush administration subsequently perceived the invasion of Iraq as a unique opportunity to restructure the regional security environment, characterised by the increasingly obsolete policy of ‘dual containment’, and consolidate the projection of US influence in the Middle East. In geo-strategic terms a US-dominated Iraq would isolate both Iran and Syria, as part of the ‘axis of evil’, as well as allowing for the establishment of permanent US bases that would negate the need for a presence in Saudi Arabia, where the stationing of US troops after 1991 had provoked widespread popular resentment across the Arab world.³⁴

Ultimately the Administration saw the invasion of Iraq as an opportunity to initiate a fundamental transformation of both Iraq and the broader Middle East. With reference to the neoconservative movement, which had a significant presence in the G. W. Bush administration, this can be seen as a continuation of its underlying aim ‘to advance a foreign policy agenda that seeks to remake substantial parts of the world in America’s image.’³⁵ In the Middle East this was to be achieved by redressing the region’s ‘democratic deficit’, something the Administration had touted as the central explanatory variable for the attacks of September 11. President G. W. Bush called for ‘a new Arab charter that champions internal reform, greater politics participation, economic openness, and free trade.’³⁶ He highlighted Iraq as an exemplar, claiming that once liberated it ‘would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region.’³⁷ This message was reinforced by a range of influential American policy-makers. James Woolsey, a former Director of the CIA and a prominent advocate of the invasion, claimed: ‘This could be a golden opportunity to begin to change the face of the Arab world... Just as what we did in Germany changed the face of Central and Eastern Europe, here we have got a golden chance.’³⁸ Similarly Condoleezza Rice, then National Security Advisor, argued that:

³⁴ The US’s construction of ‘enduring’ bases in Iraq, indicative of planning for a long-term presence, is discussed by Joshua Hammer. See Hammer, J., ‘Digging In’, *Mother Jones*, (March/April) 2005, at <http://motherjones.com/politics/2005/03/digging/>, accessed 31/1/2012.

³⁵ Halper, S., Clarke, J., *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 110.

³⁶ Bush, G. W., ‘President Discusses the Future of Iraq’, 26/2/2003, at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html>, accessed 18/1/2011.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Woolsey argued further that: ‘if you look at what we and our allies have done with the three world wars of the twentieth century – two hot, one cold – and what we’ve done in the interstices... Eighty-

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‘Much as a democratic Germany became a linchpin of a new Europe that is today whole, free and at peace, so a transformed Iraq can become a key element of a very different Middle East.’³⁹ Finally Richard Perle, Chairman of the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee, asked: ‘Would Saddam’s removal set the region aflame? ... It seems at least as likely that Saddam’s replacement by a decent Iraqi regime would open the way to a far more stable and peaceful region.’⁴⁰ Therefore, beyond the exigent aim of removing Hussein from power, the G. W. Bush administration saw the invasion of Iraq as an opportunity to democratise the Iraqi state, and by example the region. This reflected a fundamental belief that the successful introduction of liberal democratic political values and free market economic principles in Iraq, in other words America’s ideology, would eventually lead to their germination across the region, and in the process achieve hegemony in the Middle East.

The US-led coalition fought the conventional phase of the war, which began on March 20, 2003 and culminated with the fall of Baghdad on April 9, with relative ease. Aided primarily by the UK, the US rapidly advanced against Baghdad and successfully uprooted the Ba’ath party’s political and military core, which led almost overnight to the collapse of Hussein’s rule. Paul Rogers claims that: ‘the initial termination of the Saddam Hussein regime was so rapid, there was an immediate tendency to describe the conflict in Iraq as a three week war followed by a period of instability and insurgency.’⁴¹ This misperception was furthered by President G. W. Bush’s triumphant, but premature assertion on May 1 that ‘major combat operations

five years ago, when we went into World War I, there were eight or ten democracies at the time. Now it’s around a hundred and twenty – some free, some partly free. An order of magnitude! The compromises we made along the way, whether allying with Stalin or Franco or Pinochet, we have gotten around to fixing, and their successor regimes are democracies.’ See Woolsey, J., cited in Fallows, J., ‘The Fifty-First State? The Inevitable Aftermath of Victory in Iraq’, *Atlantic Monthly*, (November) 2002, at <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/11/the-fifty-first-state/2612/#>, accessed 13/12/2011.

³⁹ Rice, C., ‘Transforming the Middle East’, *Washington Post*, 7/8/2003, at http://www.iraqwatch.org/government/US/WH/us-wh-rice-wp_oped-080703.htm, accessed 28/8/2012.

⁴⁰ Perle, R., cited in Fallows, ‘The Fifty-First State?’. In 1996 Perle co-authored a policy document with Douglas Feith and others, titled *A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm*. Presented to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, it outlined new approaches to Israel’s regional security issues, amongst others emphasising the role of ‘Western values and traditions’ and advocating the removal of Hussein from power. See *A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm*, Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, 1996, at <http://www.iasps.org/strat1.htm>, accessed 31/1/2012.

⁴¹ Rogers, P., *Iraq and the War on Terror: Twelve Months of Insurgency 2004/2005*, I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 124.

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in Iraq have ended.’⁴² The start of the US occupation was marked by widespread looting across Iraq, which indiscriminately targeted all aspects of the state, amidst a general collapse of public order. The extent of this collapse was largely unanticipated by the US, and in part reflected its failure to sufficiently plan for the post-combat phase of the occupation. General Wesley Clark notes that: ‘When planning finally began... it was based on the assumption that a US invasion would be welcomed as a liberation by most Iraqi’s.’⁴³ This assumption proved largely incorrect. While Hussein’s overthrow was initially wildly popular, it was rapidly overshadowed by the realities of the occupation – extreme shortages of water, food, electricity and security. The US had crucially underestimated the sheer magnitude of the reconstruction process required in Iraq after years of conflict and sanctions. Nigel Alwyn-Foster argues that: ‘a moment of opportunity was missed immediately after the toppling of Saddam’s regime: that fleeting chance to restore law and order, maintain the momentum, nurture popular support and thus extinguish the inevitable seeds of insurgency sown amongst the ousted ruling elite.’⁴⁴ Thus a rapidly escalating, protracted conflict began between the US and an Iraqi insurgency, comprised of a diverse array of actors ranging from Sunni Ba’athists to elements affiliated with Al-Qaeda. It threatened to fatally undermine the US intervention in Iraq, and furthermore destabilise the entire region, which placed the US’s position as the regional security guarantor under unprecedented pressure.

⁴² Bush, G. W., ‘President Bush Announces Major Combat Operations in Iraq Have Ended’, 1/5/2003, at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030501-15.html>, accessed 15/12/2011.

⁴³ Clark, W., ‘Iraq: What Went Wrong’, *New York Review of Books*, 25/9/2003, at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2003/oct/23/iraq-what-went-wrong/?pagination=false>, accessed 16/12/2011. Dodge highlights the role of Iraqi exiles in fostering this climate of opinion: ‘Kanan Makiya and two other Iraqi exiles visited the president in the Oval Office in January 2003. They told President Bush that US troops would be greeted with ‘sweets and chocolate’... This theme was also promoted by the influential Washington pundit Fouad Ajami... [whose] predictions were in turn quoted by Vice President Cheney in a speech in Summer 2002.’ See Dodge, T., ‘Iraqi Transitions: From Regime Change to State Collapse’, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 4/5, 2005, p. 721.

⁴⁴ Alwyn-Foster, N., ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom Phase 4: The Watershed the US Army Still Needs to Recognise?’, Royal College of Defence Studies, (November) 2005, p. 5, at <http://www.da.mod.uk/publications/Alywn-Foster%20SHP%202005.pdf/view>, accessed 16/12/2011.

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Exporting 'Democracy' to Iraq

The foundations of the G. W. Bush administration's efforts to democratise Iraq were laid well before the invasion itself commenced, with its outright dismissal of the Middle East's exceptionalism. As Richard Perle argued: 'A democratic Iraq would be a powerful refutation of the patronising view that Arabs are incapable of democracy.'⁴⁵ G. W. Bush himself expounded on this theme:

There was a time when many said that the cultures of Japan and Germany were incapable of sustaining democratic values. Well, they were wrong. Some say the same of Iraq today. They are mistaken. The nation of Iraq – with its proud heritage, abundant resources and skilled and educated people – is fully capable of moving toward democracy and living in freedom.⁴⁶

This argument was important in that it clearly distinguished the G. W. Bush administration from its predecessors, including Clinton, which although paying reference to democratisation, had not sought to apply it explicitly in their policies to the region. The application of a universalist interpretation of democracy to Iraq, and for the first time to a country in the Middle East, marks an important threshold in US policy to the region. It indicated that the monopoly exercised by authoritarianism in the region was finite in the eyes of the G. W. Bush administration.

The Administration's broad intentions in Iraq, with reference to the strategy of democracy promotion, were summarized concisely by William Robinson:

Washington hopes it can bring together a national elite that can act as effective intermediaries between the Iraqi masses and the US/transnational project for the country. This elite is expected to establish its effective control over the political society... created by the US occupation force and its ideological hegemony over the country's fragmented and unruly civil society. The objective is to bring about a political order that can achieve internal stability as the necessary condition for the country to function as a reliable supplier of oil, an investment outlet for transnational capital, and a

⁴⁵ Perle, R., cited in Fallows, 'The Fifty-First State?'

⁴⁶ Bush, 'President Discusses the Future of Iraq'.

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platform for further transnational economic and political penetration of the Middle East.⁴⁷

Robinson argued further that:

weaving together a pro-Western elite capable of assuming the reigns of local power (no matter how limited, fragmented and controlled by Washington) is only half the US strategy. The other half is to try to control and suppress alternative political initiatives within civil society and prevent popular or independent political voices from emerging. As the US moves forward with plans to turn over “sovereignty” to a hand-picked and unrepresentative body “democracy promotion” programs will have the twin objective of: (1) fostering political and civic organizations in civil society that can build a social base for a new Iraqi government; and (2) suppressing and isolating those organizations and social movements that oppose the US program and put forward an alternative.⁴⁸

The promotion of elite-based democracy in Iraq, as part of a long-term pursuit of hegemony in both the country and the broader region, incorporated a range of reforms addressing the Iraqi economy, political system and civil society more generally; these are examined in detail below.

Economic Reform

‘If it all works out, Iraq will be a capitalist’s dream’ wrote the *Economist* in September 2003.⁴⁹ The first tranche of reforms enacted by the G. W. Bush administration in Iraq addressed the economy. Long a centralised, state-monopolised economy under Hussein, from the outset of the occupation the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), Paul Bremer, emphasized the need for liberalisation. He announced that: ‘A free economy and a free people go hand in hand. History tells us that substantial and broadly held resources, protected by private property [and] private rights, are the best protection of political freedom. Building such prosperity

⁴⁷ Robinson, W., ‘What to Expect from US “Democracy Promotion” in Iraq’, *New Political Science*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (September) 2004, p. 446.

⁴⁸ Robinson, ‘What to Expect from US “Democracy Promotion” in Iraq’, p. 447.

⁴⁹ ‘Iraq’s Economic Liberalisation: Let’s All Go to the Yard Sale’, *Economist*, 25/9/2003, at <http://www.economist.com/node/2092719>, accessed 17/12/2011.

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in Iraq will be a key measure of our success here.⁵⁰ As has been argued previously, this reflects a long-standing theme of US foreign policy, which has consistently posited free market economies as the foundation of democratic government.⁵¹ As a result Bremer advocated a ‘full-scale economic overhaul’ of Iraq, claiming that the US was ‘going to create the first real free-market economy in the Arab world.’⁵² He also observed that: ‘Everybody knows we cannot wait until there is an elected government to start economic reform.’⁵³ The template for the reform of Iraq’s economy was a report written by a conservative think tank, the Heritage Foundation, titled ‘The Road to Economic Prosperity for a Post-Saddam Iraq.’⁵⁴ The report argued ‘for the complete neoliberalization of Iraq’s internal markets, trade relations, and for the privatization of its industries, including oil.’⁵⁵ These principles were subsequently reflected in a document drafted by USAID and the Treasury Department, titled ‘Moving The Iraqi Economy From Recovery to Sustainable Growth’, which outlined the ‘broader vision for Iraq’s future economy.’⁵⁶ The document anticipated reforms in ‘the areas of fiscal reform, financial sector reform, trade, legal and regulatory, and privatization.’⁵⁷ It stated that: ‘It should be clearly understood that the efforts undertaken will be designed to establish the basic legal framework for a functioning market economy; *taking appropriate advantage of the*

⁵⁰ Bremer, P., cited in Looney, R., ‘The Neoliberal Model’s Planned Role in Iraq’s Economic Transition’, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4, (Autumn) 2003, p. 574.

⁵¹ Rajiv Chandrasekaran argues that: ‘Bremer had come to Iraq to build not just a democracy but a free market. He insisted that economic reform and political reform were intertwined... [Bremer claimed:] “If we don’t get their economy right, no matter how fancy our political transformation, it won’t work”.’ See Chandrasekaran, R., *Green Zone: Imperial Life in the Emerald City*, Bloomsbury, 2010, p. 68.

⁵² Bremer, P., cited in Chandrasekaran, *Green Zone*, p. 182.

⁵³ Bremer, P., cited in Looney, ‘The Neoliberal Model’s Planned Role in Iraq’s Economic Transition’, p. 574.

⁵⁴ See Cohen, A., O’Driscoll, G., ‘The Road to Economic Prosperity for a Post-Saddam Iraq’, *Heritage Foundation*, No. 1633, 5/3/2003, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2003/03/the-road-to-economic-prosperity-for-a-post-saddam-iraq>, accessed 10/11/2011.

⁵⁵ Looney, ‘The Neoliberal Model’s Planned Role in Iraq’s Economic Transition’, p. 570. The neoliberal economic model is comprised broadly of the following: fiscal adjustment, privatisation, decontrolling and/or adjusting prices, decontrol of the financial sector, trade liberalisation, incentives to foreign investments, social security reform and labour market reform. See Baer, W., Maloney, W., ‘Neoliberalism and Income Distribution in Latin America’, *World Development*, Vol. 25, No. 3, (March) 1997, pp. 314-5.

⁵⁶ King Jr., N., ‘Bush Officials Draft Broad Plan For Free-Market Economy in Iraq’, *Wall Street Journal*, 1/5/2003, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB105174142750007600,00.html>, accessed 30/8/2012.

⁵⁷ ‘Moving the Iraqi Economy From Recovery to Sustainable Growth, Statement of Work’, BearingPoint Inc., 21/2/2003, cited in Juhasz, A., ‘Ambitions of Empire: The Bush Administration Economic Plan for Iraq (and Beyond)’, *LeftTurn Magazine*, No. 12, (February/March) 2004, at <http://www.ifg.org/analysis/globalization/ambition.htm>, accessed 20/12/2011.

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unique opportunity for rapid progress in this area presented by the current configuration of political circumstances' (emphasis added).⁵⁸ Eric Laursen argued that the document: 'lays out a series of steps the administration wants to achieve over the next year in Iraq, steps that will launch the country as a test case for exporting the neoliberal economic model to the Middle East.'⁵⁹ This raises comparisons with US policy in Latin America, where countries such as Chile adopted neoliberal economic reforms with direct American assistance, and which later spread throughout the region.⁶⁰

The process of reform was initiated with Bremer's ratification of a series of 'orders' addressing the Iraqi economy. These called for the elimination of most trade barriers, the privatisation of state-owned companies, the provision of full ownership rights over Iraqi companies by foreign companies (in all sectors apart from oil and mineral extraction), the unrestricted repatriation of profits made by foreign companies in Iraq, 'national treatment' for foreign companies (which ensured them equal opportunities with Iraqi companies), the privatization of Iraq's banking sector, and a flat tax of fifteen per cent.⁶¹ The one law dating to the Hussein-era not repealed by Bremer was one that barred 'public sector workers and those employed by public enterprises from joining or being represented by unions.'⁶² The measures introduced represented 'the kind of wish-list that foreign investors and donor agencies dream of for developing markets.'⁶³ As a result Edmund Andrews argues that almost overnight, Iraq was 'transformed from one of the world's most isolated economies

⁵⁸ Moving the Iraqi Economy From Recovery to Sustainable Growth, Statement of Work'.

⁵⁹ Laursen, E., 'Privatizing Iraq: The Bush Administration's Neoliberal Blueprint for the Post-Saddam State', *In These Times*, 28/5/2003, at <http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/325/>, accessed 20/12/2011.

⁶⁰ This is discussed in Chapter Two.

⁶¹ Juhasz, 'Ambitions of Empire'. See Bremer, P., 'Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 12 - Trade Liberalization Policy', 7/6/2003, at <http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/CPAORD12.pdf>, accessed 21/12/2011; Bremer, P., 'Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 39 - Foreign Investment', 19/9/2003, at http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20031220_CPAORD_39_Foreign_Investment_.pdf, accessed 21/12/2011; Bremer, P., 'Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 40 - Bank Law', 19/9/2003, at http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030919_CPAORD40_Bank_Law_with_Annex.pdf, accessed 21/12/2011; Bremer, P., 'Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 37 - Tax Strategy for 2003', 19/9/2003 at http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030919_CPAORD_37_Tax_Strategy_for_2003.pdf, accessed 21/12/2011.

⁶² Juhasz, 'Ambitions of Empire'.

⁶³ 'Iraq's Economic Liberalisation', *Economist*.

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into a huge new free-trade zone.’⁶⁴ This had an immediate impact on the Iraqi economy. As Andrews noted:

While goods simply unavailable or unaffordable before are flowing into the country there is a downside. Iraqi manufacturers, which employed more than one tenth of all workers before the war, are almost powerless to match the new competition. Their equipment is badly outdated and they lack marketing skills to compete with foreign goods. The free-market shocks are even bigger for the country’s state owned industrial companies, which produce everything from packaged goods to electrical equipment and employ more than 100,000 people.⁶⁵

USAID contracted the BearingPoint consultancy to implement these reforms. It was tasked with creating Iraq’s budget, establishing trade and customs regulations, privatizing state-owned enterprises, issuing a new currency and setting exchange rates, reopening banks, writing business laws, organising a tax collection system, and weaning Iraqis off the UN Oil-for-Food programme.⁶⁶ This was accompanied by measures to integrate Iraq into the global economic system. Naomi Klein notes that:

Bremer announced the awarding of the first three licences for foreign banks to operate in Iraq. A week earlier, he had sent members of the Iraqi Governing Council to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to request observer status – the first step to becoming a WTO member. And Iraq’s occupiers have just negotiated an \$850m loan from the International Monetary Fund.⁶⁷

As was the case with Egypt in 1991, Iraq’s economic debts were also written down by the Paris Club. Stuart Bowen Jr., the US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, claims that:

⁶⁴ Andrews, E., ‘After Years of Stagnation, Iraqi Industries are Falling to a Wave of Imports’, *New York Times*, 1/6/2003, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/01/world/after-war-economy-after-years-stagnation-iraqi-industries-are-fallingwave.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>, accessed 19/12/2011.

⁶⁵ Andrews, ‘After Years of Stagnation, Iraqi Industries are Falling to a Wave of Imports’.

⁶⁶ Cox, J., ‘BearingPoint Gets Contested Iraq Contract’, *USA Today*, 21/7/2003, at http://www.usatoday.com/money/world/iraq/2003-07-21-iraq_x.htm, accessed 21/12/2011.

⁶⁷ Klein, N., ‘Democracy and Robbery’, *Guardian*, 10/2/2004, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/feb/10/iraq.comment>, accessed 6/2/2012.

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80 percent of Iraq's \$38.9 billion debt to Paris Club creditors was forgiven. More significant debt forgiveness would follow over the next few years, which helped the country's foundering economy to stabilize and begin to grow. The extraordinary elimination of much of Iraq's debt since 2003 amounts to one of the most generous acts of collective international debt-forgiveness in modern times.⁶⁸

Finally, the US established a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Iraq in 2005, as a prelude to negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement.⁶⁹

Arguments were made regarding the illegality of the unilateral imposition of such radical measures on Iraq, in violation of its national sovereignty and constitution, and furthermore the Geneva and Hague conventions.⁷⁰ For instance the UK's Attorney General, Peter Goldsmith, advised Prime Minister Tony Blair in a confidential memorandum that the proposed reforms in occupied Iraq were likely illegal. He stated: 'My view is that a further Security Council resolution is needed to authorise imposing reform and restructuring of Iraq and its government.'⁷¹ These arguments were ultimately disregarded. As Klein argued at the time: 'Washington wants a transitional body in Iraq with the full powers of sovereign government, able to lock in decisions that an elected government will inherit. To that end... [the] CPA is pushing ahead with its illegal free-market reforms, counting on these changes being ratified by an Iraqi government that it can control.'⁷² Concerns surrounding the extreme nature of the reforms, commonly known as economic 'shock therapy' given

⁶⁸ Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, 'Hard Lessons: The Iraq Reconstruction Experience', 2/2/2009, pp. 89-90, at http://www.sigir.mil/files/HardLessons/Hard_Lessons_Report.pdf, accessed 6/2/2012.

⁶⁹ See 'Trade and Investment Framework Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Iraq Concerning the Development of Trade and Investment Relations', 11/7/2005, at http://www.ustr.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/agreements/tifa/asset_upload_file836_13617.pdf, accessed 23/10/2012.

⁷⁰ Mate, A., 'Pillage is Forbidden: Why the Privatisation of Iraq is Illegal', *Guardian*, 7/11/2003, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/nov/07/iraq.comment>, accessed 19/12/2011.

⁷¹ Goldsmith, P., cited in Innes, J., 'US and UK Action in Post-War Iraq May be Illegal', *Scotsman*, 22/5/2003, at http://www.scotsman.com/news/international/us_and_uk_action_in_post_war_iraq_may_be_illegal_1_650300, accessed 20/12/2010.

⁷² Klein, 'Democracy and Robbery'; See also Klein, N., 'Baghdad Year Zero: Pillaging Iraq in Pursuit of a Neocon Utopia', *Harper's Magazine*, (September) 2004, at <http://harpers.org/archive/2004/09/0080197>, accessed 30/8/2012.

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the negative experiences of former Soviet-bloc countries in the 1990s, were also disregarded.⁷³ Joseph Stiglitz claimed that:

the Bush administration, backed by a few handpicked Iraqis, is pushing Iraq towards an even more radical form of shock therapy than was pursued in the former Soviet world. Indeed, shock therapy's advocates argue that its failures were due not to excessive speed – too much shock and not enough therapy – but to insufficient shock. So Iraqis better prepare for an even more brutal dose.⁷⁴

The quandary faced by Iraqis was summarized aptly by Ali Allawi, then Iraq's interim trade minister: 'We suffered through the economic theories of socialism, Marxism, and then cronyism. Now we face the prospect of free-market fundamentalism.'⁷⁵

Political Reform

Before the invasion of Iraq, President G. W. Bush stated: 'The United States has no intention of determining the precise form of Iraq's new government. That choice belongs to the Iraqi people. Yet, we will ensure that one brutal dictator is not replaced by another. All Iraqis must have a voice in the new government, and all citizens must have their rights protected.'⁷⁶ In fact the US did intend to determine the broad composition of Iraq's post-Hussein government, and not simply that it would fall within the parameters of a democratic system. As suggested above by Robinson, the G. W. Bush administration's initial intention was to transfer power to a coalition of exiled Iraqi elites.⁷⁷ This coalition was likely to be headed by Ahmed Chalabi, the leader of the Iraqi National Congress, who would form an interim government before elections could be held to legitimise the arrangement.⁷⁸ Jane Mayer of the *New*

⁷³ Economic shock therapy consists of the 'quick privatization of state-owned assets and abrupt liberalization of trade, prices, and capital flows.' See Stiglitz, J., 'Iraq's Next Shock Will be Shock Therapy', *Project Syndicate*, 12/2/2004, at <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/stiglitz42/> English, accessed 20/12/2011.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Allawi, A., cited in Crampton, T., 'Iraq Official Warns on Fast Economic Shift', *New York Times*, 14/10/2003, at http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/14/business/worldbusiness/14iht-trade_ed3_.html, accessed 19/12/2011.

⁷⁶ Bush, 'President Discusses the Future of Iraq'.

⁷⁷ See Robinson, 'What to Expect from US "Democracy Promotion" in Iraq'.

⁷⁸ Chalabi was one of the better-known Iraqi exiles in the West. Mayer argues that: 'Chalabi... had surfaced almost immediately as the C.I.A.'s favored opposition figure... A secular Shiite who was

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Yorker interviewed a prominent State Department official who ‘saw numerous documents that had been prepared by the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans, [headed by Douglas Feith,] which devoted considerable effort to planning the war.’⁷⁹ The official claimed that: ‘Every list of Iraqis they wanted to work with for positions in the government of postwar Iraq included Chalabi and all of the members of his organization.’⁸⁰ Support for Chalabi was particularly prevalent amongst influential neoconservatives such as Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Perle and Feith. With the exception of Cheney they were all based in the Pentagon, where ‘the view was that Chalabi and his colleagues were going to lead the way in creating a secular, stable democracy’ in Iraq.⁸¹ Perle himself argued that: ‘Those of us who wanted to see Saddam’s regime brought down regarded... [Chalabi] as a very important find.’⁸² He claimed that he and the others regarded Chalabi as someone who shared their values, and would be supportive of US interests in the Middle East.⁸³ For instance Chalabi professed that a liberated Iraq would establish diplomatic and trade relations with Israel, support of which is central to the neoconservative movement, but also the US more generally.⁸⁴ Therefore shortly after the invasion, Roger Morris notes that: ‘the U.S. flew in four huge C-17 transports carrying Ahmad Chalabi and his 700 Pentagon-paid militia members. An ex-banker convicted of fraud in Jordan, Chalabi is a longtime expatriate of reactionary bent with scant Iraqi constituency. Yet he is the Pentagon’s chosen successor to Saddam Hussein.’⁸⁵

passionately dedicated to overthrowing Saddam, he spoke excellent English, dressed elegantly, and was well organized and impressively connected.’ See Mayer, ‘The Manipulator’. Chalabi headed the INC, founded by the CIA to facilitate the overthrow of Hussein. The INC was one of the main sources of flawed intelligence used by the G. W. Bush administration to justify the war against Iraq. Mayer notes that: ‘Between 1992 and... [2004], the U.S. government funnelled more than a hundred million dollars to the Iraqi National Congress. The current Bush Administration gave Chalabi’s group at least thirty-nine million dollars. Exactly what the I.N.C. provided in exchange for these sums has yet to be fully explained.’ See Mayer, ‘The Manipulator’.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Chandrasekaran, *Green Zone*, p. 35.

⁸² Perle, R., cited in Bonin, R., ‘Iraq’s One-Man War Machine’, *Los Angeles Times*, 29/12/2011, at <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/dec/29/opinion/la-oe-bonin-chalabi-and-iraq-20111229>, accessed 23/1/2012.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Dizard, J., ‘How Ahmed Chalabi Conned the Neocons’, *Salon*, 5/5/2004, at http://www.salon.com/2004/05/04/chalabi_4/, accessed 31/1/2012.

⁸⁵ Morris, R., ‘Freedom, American-Style: The Inherent Clash Between a Democratic Iraq and U.S. Policy Begins to Take Shape’, *Los Angeles Times*, 23/4/2003, at http://articles.latimes.com/2003/apr/23/opinion/oe-morris23_, accessed 21/12/2011.

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The role of Chalabi and other Iraqi exiles can be understood using the Gramscian concept of ‘organic intellectuals’. Proselytizing the virtues of Western liberal democracy and free market economics within Iraqi society, the exiles’ function was to provide legitimation for the promoted ideology, supporting the various political, economic, social and cultural reforms implemented under the strategy of democracy promotion. In February 2003, the Pentagon awarded a \$33 million contract to Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC). It was tasked with recruiting around 150 exiles to administer Iraq following the US invasion, a collective known as the Iraq Reconstruction and Development Council (IRDC).⁸⁶ Responsible for shaping the future direction of Iraqi society, Douglas Jehl observed that: ‘most of the advisers espouse liberal, secular ideals that are at odds even with those of many other Iraqi exiles as well as powerful forces inside Iraq.’⁸⁷ Wolfowitz claimed that: ‘It’s an enormously valuable asset to have people who share our values, understand what we’re about as a country, and are in most cases citizens of this country, but who also speak the language, share the culture and know their way around Iraq.’⁸⁸ The pedagogical stance adopted by the US towards Iraqi society was expressed by Jim Beaulieu, a representative of the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), which was responsible for introducing ‘democracy’ to cities and towns across Iraq.⁸⁹ He claimed that: ‘RTI had to deal with people, ordinary Iraqis, who had no fundamental concept of democracy. We needed expatriates to teach these concepts.’⁹⁰ One of these expatriates, Munther Al-Fadhil, claimed: ‘I have a dream, to build in Iraq a civil society, a democracy, like Switzerland or Sweden. But now there is chaos and risk – from Islamic fanatic groups, and from the Ba’ath Party and from the Arab terrorists who supported the Hussein government. The Iraqi people have been brainwashed and it is our responsibility to build a new brain.’⁹¹

⁸⁶ The roots of the IRDC can be traced to the Iraqi Forum for Democracy, which was founded in 1998, the same year the Iraq Liberation Act was passed. It was ‘composed mostly of secular professionals from across the spectrum of Iraq’s Shiite, Sunni, Kurdish and Christian populations’, with its stated mission being ‘to promote democracy and democratic values for Iraq by peaceful means.’ See Jehl, D., ‘After Effects: The Advisers; Iraqi Exiles, Backed by U.S., Return to Reinvent a Country’, *New York Times*, 4/5/2003, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/04/world/aftereffects-the-advisers-iraqi-exiles-backed-by-us-return-to-reinvent-a-country.html?page-wanted=all>, accessed 19/1/2012; Barker, ‘Democracy or Polyarchy’, p. 120.

⁸⁷ Jehl, ‘After Effects: The Advisers; Iraqi Exiles, Backed by U.S., Return to Reinvent a Country’.

⁸⁸ Wolfowitz, P., cited in Jehl, ‘After Effects: The Advisers; Iraqi Exiles, Backed by U.S., Return to Reinvent a Country’.

⁸⁹ Chatterjee, P., *Iraq, Inc.: A Profitable Occupation*, Seven Stories Press, 2004, p. 183.

⁹⁰ Beaulieu, J., cited in Chatterjee, *Iraq, Inc.*, p. 204.

⁹¹ Jehl, ‘After Effects: The Advisers; Iraqi Exiles, Backed by U.S., Return to Reinvent a Country’.

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President G. W. Bush outlined the broad contours of the US's ongoing effort to promote democracy in Iraq in November 2003:

As in the defense of Greece in 1947, and later in the Berlin Airlift, the strength and will of free peoples are now being tested before a watching world. And we will meet this test. Securing democracy in Iraq is the work of many hands. American and coalition forces are sacrificing for the peace of Iraq and for the security of free nations. Aid workers from many countries are facing danger to help the Iraqi people. The National Endowment for Democracy is promoting women's rights, and training Iraqi journalists, and teaching the skills of political participation. Iraqis, themselves – police and borders guards and local officials – are joining in the work and they are sharing in the sacrifice.⁹²

As one of the most important expressions of the strategy of democracy promotion in Iraq under G. W. Bush, the timing of this speech is of particular interest. By this point it had become increasingly apparent that the primary justification for the invasion of Iraq, the presence of weapons of mass destruction, was based on false premises. A solid rationale was therefore required to legitimise the continued occupation of Iraq. Rajiv Chandrasekaran claims that: 'With search teams unable to turn up any weapons of mass destruction, the primary American justification for the invasion, ... [Bremer] deemed the development of democracy to be no longer just an important goal. It was *the* goal. Iraq would have to become that shining city on a hill in the Arab world.'⁹³ Political reforms rapidly followed the economic reforms discussed above. A range of actors were tasked with constructing a rudimentary democratic framework in Iraq – these included governmental actors such as USAID, non-governmental actors such as the NED, NDI and IRI, private American organisations such as SAIC and RTI, and local organisations such as the Iraq Foundation and the Iraq Institute for Democracy.

⁹² Bush, G. W., 'Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy', 6/11/2003, at <http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary>, accessed 17/12/2012.

⁹³ Chandrasekaran, *Green Zone*, p. 176.

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One of the signature initiatives was the ‘Iraqi Local Governance Project’ implemented by RTI.⁹⁴ Contracted by USAID to introduce ‘democracy’ to 180 Iraqi cities and towns, RTI used strategies it had developed in El Salvador and Indonesia, forming neighbourhood councils to administer local affairs such as health, water and security, but also to identify promising political candidates for regional caucuses.⁹⁵ As Rita Bergmann and Victoria Kaplan noted: ‘The project’s 265 professional advisors – mostly Americans and Iraqi expatriates – attend local meetings, seek out leaders and teach “how-to” classes on democracy.’⁹⁶ In practice the members of each neighbourhood council were selected in restricted elections, drawn from a pool of around 200 prominent local leaders vetted by US authorities.⁹⁷ Pratap Chatterjee argues that:

The idea was to engage the local people in a semipopular “appointocracy” at the local level that could be sold to the world at large as a first step towards democracy. The system appeared to be deliberately mixing the idea of public participation (anyone could submit names) with a degree of voting (limited to those who had been vetted from the list of submitted names), which required approval by the military before any final authority was awarded.⁹⁸

The intention was that neighbourhood councils would select district councils, which in turn would select county councils, which would nominate provincial councils, from whom governors would be appointed – all of course with the final approval of the occupation authorities.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ USAID provided around \$513 million for RTI’s local governance programs in Iraq from 2003 to 2008. See Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, ‘Cost, Outcome, and Oversight of Local Governance Program Contracts with Research Triangle Institute’, 21/10/2008, at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PCAAB829.pdf, accessed 13/9/2012.

⁹⁵ Chatterjee, *Iraq, Inc.*, p. 183; Robinson, ‘What to Expect from US “Democracy Promotion” in Iraq’, p. 443. A 2004 USAID bulletin entitled ‘Democracy in Iraq’ claimed that local governance programs had assisted ‘445 neighborhood, 194 sub-district, 90 district, and 16 governorate councils, instrumental in advancing an understanding of representative and accountable government.’ See ‘Democracy in Iraq’, USAID, (May) 2004, at <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/676385/Democracy-In-Iraq---Building-democracy-from-the-ground-up>, accessed 16/9/2012.

⁹⁶ Bergmann, R., Kaplan, V., ‘Duke: War Profiteer?’, *The Chronicle*, 22/2/2004, at <http://dukechronicle.com/article/guest-commentary-duke-war-profiteer>, accessed 24/1/2011.

⁹⁷ Chatterjee, *Iraq, Inc.*, pp. 191-2.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

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However, as in the province of Taji for example, some Iraqis had taken the initiative months prior and formed their own representative councils, with many of the positions filled through election rather than selection.¹⁰⁰ RTI disregarded these homegrown initiatives and imposed its own process anew. One local Iraqi told the *New York Times*: ‘We feel we are going backwards.’¹⁰¹ This followed an earlier incident in the early days of the occupation, when US military commanders’ had cancelled local elections across Iraq, instead appointing former Iraqi army generals and police colonels as mayors of cities such as Najaf, Tikrit and Samarra.¹⁰² At the time Bremer stated that there was ‘no blanket prohibition’ against self-rule.¹⁰³ He claimed: ‘I’m not opposed to it, but I want to do it a way that takes care of our concerns... Elections that are held too early can be destructive. It’s got to be done very carefully... In a postwar situation like this, if you start holding elections, the people who are rejectionists tend to win.’¹⁰⁴ The above reflect the superficiality of the political reforms in question, but more so the US’ attempts to retain ultimate control over the political process.

Civil Society Reform

As with the US strategy of democracy promotion elsewhere, a central aim in Iraq was to establish a functioning civil society, broadly supportive of the promoted ideology. But as the locus of hegemony, the almost total dearth of civil society in Iraq posed a significant challenge. Toby Dodge argues:

By the late 1980s, Iraqi society had been effectively atomised, with intermediate institutions, political, economic or social, broken by the military and economic power of the regime. Those societal institutions the regime thought useful were reconstituted under government patronage to serve as vehicles for mobilisation, resource distribution and control. Trade unions and social organisations external to the state were either coopted or dismantled.

¹⁰⁰ Eunjung Cha, A., ‘Hope and Confusion Mark Iraq’s Democracy Lessons’, *Washington Post*, 24/11/2003, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A8830-2003Nov23>, accessed 24/1/2012.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Booth, W., Chandrasekaran, R., ‘Occupation Forces Halt Elections Throughout Iraq’, *Washington Post*, 28/6/2003, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A42905-2003Jun27>, accessed 24/1/2012.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Bremer, P., cited in Booth, Chandrasekaran, ‘Occupation Forces Halt Elections Throughout Iraq’.

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Individuals found their welfare and economic needs depended upon their own unmediated relations with the state. Put simply, there was no functioning civil society in Iraq before regime change in 2003.¹⁰⁵

Following the overthrow of Hussein though, this began to change rapidly. For instance Dodge notes that:

By July 2003 this new space for political action had given rise to at least 140 different interest groups and political parties mobilising popular opinion and lobbying the occupying authorities. In addition, 170 daily, weekly and monthly publications had sprung up, giving a platform to the diversity of views that could now be openly expressed in post- Saddam Iraq.¹⁰⁶

The US subsequently sought to encourage, but also steer the development of Iraqi civil society. Andrew Natsios, USAID's Administrator, argued that: 'If a new democratic ethos is to replace that of autocracy, it must be built from the ground up in Iraq and made part of the ordinary operations of Iraqi society.'¹⁰⁷ The reform of civil society was addressed primarily through USAID's 'Iraq Civil Society Program'.¹⁰⁸ It was implemented by America's Development Foundation (ADF), which had previously worked on behalf of US democracy promotion in Nicaragua and Haiti.¹⁰⁹ ADF was awarded a \$43 million contract to focus on the areas of civic education, women's advocacy, anti-corruption and human rights – in order to 'strengthen civil society's role in the economic and political development of a broad cadre of indigenous [civil society organizations]'.¹¹⁰ This was realized through the establishment of four civil society resource centers, which provided training and technical assistance, a small grants program, and supported the development of a

¹⁰⁵ Dodge, *Iraq's Future*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁶ Dodge, 'Iraqi Transitions', p. 708.

¹⁰⁷ Natsios, A., 'Democratic Opportunity and the Islamic World', 22/4/2005, at <http://www.usaid.gov/press/speeches/2005/sp050422.html>, accessed 24/1/2012.

¹⁰⁸ See 'Building on Transition - Iraq Civil Society Program (ICSP) Evaluation', USAID, 24/5/2007, at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACJ881.pdf, accessed 30/8/2012.

¹⁰⁹ Office of Inspector General, 'Audit of USAID/Iraq's Civil Society Activities', Report No. E-267-07-001-P, 5/11/2006, at <http://www.usaid.gov/oig/public/fy07rpts/e-267-07-001-p.pdf>, accessed 1/2/2012; Robinson, W., *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 286.

¹¹⁰ This figure was later increased to \$59.1 million ending in June 2007. See Office of Inspector General, 'Audit of USAID/Iraq's Civil Society Activities'.

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‘professional independent media sector in Iraq... to provide high quality information via print and broadcast media that respond to the needs of their audiences.’¹¹¹

As elsewhere, the organizations supported by the US in Iraq as part of the strategy of democracy promotion were of a partisan nature. The Iraq Foundation, which implemented the women’s advocacy programme on behalf of ADF, serves as one example.¹¹² Founded in 1991 by Iraqi expatriates, it received over \$1.5 million in funding from the NED and the State Department in 2003 alone.¹¹³ The Iraq Foundation’s stated aims were: ‘To expand the constituency for democracy among Iraqis... educate non-Iraqis about Iraq and strengthen support for a democratic new beginning... [and] educate non-Iraqis about the potential for Iraq to become a major contributor to democratic reform and socio-economic development in the region.’¹¹⁴ Alongside the neoconservative Foundation for the Defence of Democracies, the Iraq Foundation played a key role in establishing the Iraq-America Freedom Alliance, an organization which was created to ‘provide Americans with a fuller picture of Iraq by giving voice to Iraqis who are grateful for their newfound freedom and working to secure democracy in their country.’¹¹⁵ The backgrounds of the individuals that formed the Iraq Foundation further highlight its partisan agenda. It was co-founded by Basil Al-Rahim, the head of MerchantBridge, a leading investment banking group in the Middle East.¹¹⁶ Adam Hanieh claims that: ‘MerchantBridge was the first private equity fund to focus on the Middle East and in 2004 was appointed by the Iraqi Ministry of Industry and Materials to advise on the leasing of state owned firms to the private sector.’¹¹⁷ Al-Rahim testified before the US Congress’ Joint Economic Committee in June 2003, stating that: ‘no economic rejuvenation and vitalization can

¹¹¹ Office of Inspector General, ‘Audit of USAID/Iraq’s Civil Society Activities’.

¹¹² ‘Iraq Foundation’, at <http://www.iraqfoundation.org/>, accessed 1/2/2012.

¹¹³ Hanieh, A., “‘Democracy Promotion’ and Neo-Liberalism in the Middle East’, *State of Nature*, Vol. 3, (Spring) 2006, at <http://www.stateofnature.org/democracyPromotion.html>, accessed 1/2/2012. The Iraq Foundation was originally known as the Free Iraq Foundation, and was ‘supported by the NED throughout the 1990s... [receiving] regular funding to publicize its work and produce its Iraqi Issues newsletter.’ See Barker, ‘Democracy or Polyarchy’, p. 118.

¹¹⁴ Hanieh, “‘Democracy Promotion’ and Neo-Liberalism in the Middle East’.

¹¹⁵ Hanieh, “‘Democracy Promotion’ and Neo-Liberalism in the Middle East’. The Foundation for the Defence of Democracies describes itself as ‘founded by a group of former U.S. officials and visionary philanthropists shortly after the attacks of September 11, 2001 to help free nations defend themselves.’ See ‘About FDD’, at <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/about-fdd>, accessed 1/2/2012.

¹¹⁶ Hanieh, “‘Democracy Promotion’ and Neo-Liberalism in the Middle East’.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

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happen without empowering the Iraqi private sector.¹¹⁸ Another co-founder of the Iraq Foundation, Rend Al-Rahim Francke, testified in August 2002 before the US Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, claiming: 'Iraqis desperately want to be free... [of Saddam Hussein.] They know the only country to help them is the United States.'¹¹⁹ A relative of Ahmed Chalabi, she was appointed by the interim Iraqi Governing Council as its ambassador to the US.¹²⁰ Finally Laith Kubba, also a co-founder of the Iraq Foundation, served as a senior advisor and spokesman for Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari of the Iraqi Transitional Government.¹²¹ He was subsequently employed by the NED to oversee its Middle East and North Africa programmes.¹²² The above reflect the US's support of individuals and organisations conforming to the promoted liberal democratic ideology, despite constituting a small proportion of Iraqi society, as part of the strategy of democracy promotion.

The successful promotion of political, economic, social and cultural reforms, as part of the strategy of democracy promotion, was dependent on their acceptance by Iraqi society at large. In order to achieve this, in addition to cultivating civil society as a whole, the US utilised the media and educational systems. This constituted an attempt to induce Iraqi society to internalise the promoted ideology, the defining feature of a hegemony. Following the invasion in 2003, the US provided SAIC with a \$15 million contract to overhaul the existing Iraqi media network.¹²³ Chandrasekaran notes that SAIC hired Robert Reilly, a former director of the Voice of America, to oversee the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) project.¹²⁴ He claims that: 'During the Reagan administration, Reilly had headed a White House information operations campaign in Nicaragua to drum up support for the Contra rebels.'¹²⁵ The IMN had three core elements: the Al-Iraqiya television station, the al-Sabah daily

¹¹⁸ Al-Rahim, B., 'Transforming the Iraqi Economy - The Phoenix Plan', Testimony to the US Congress Joint Economic Committee, 10/6/2003, at http://www.aei.org/files/2003/06/10/20030618_alahim.pdf, accessed 1/2/2012.

¹¹⁹ 'Experts: Iraqis "Eager For Change" From Saddam', *CNN*, 1/8/2002, at http://articles.cnn.com/2002-08-01/politics/senate.iraq_1_iraqis-regime-change-arab-shiites?_s=PM:ALLPOLITICS, accessed 1/2/2012.

¹²⁰ 'Iraq's Governing Council Appoints Rend Rahim Francke as its US Representative', Iraq Foundation, at <http://www.iraqfoundation.org/rend.html>, accessed 1/2/2012.

¹²¹ Kanan Makiya, the Iraqi exile who assured President G. W. Bush that US troops would be welcomed by Iraqis as liberators, was another co-founder of the Iraq Foundation.

¹²² 'Laith Kubba Interview', *Goals For Americans*, 1/4/2008, at <http://www.goalsforamericans.org/2008/04/01/laith-kubba/>, accessed 1/2/2012.

¹²³ Barker, 'Democracy or Polyarchy', p. 119.

¹²⁴ Chandrasekaran, *Green Zone*, p. 146.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

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newspaper, and a radio network.¹²⁶ Barker argues that: ‘Despite being touted by the US as an independent media network, the initial IMN project grant was issued from a division of the Defence Department that ran psyops (psychological warfare operations).’¹²⁷ Don North, who was hired to rebuild Al-Iraqiya, claimed that that the IMN was an ‘irrelevant mouthpiece for CPA propaganda, managed news and mediocre foreign programs.’¹²⁸ He subsequently testified before the US Senate Democratic Policy Committee, stating that Al-Iraqiya had been provided with a ‘laundry list of CPA activities to cover’, and that CPA officials had informed him that ‘we were running a public diplomacy operation.’¹²⁹ The US’s efforts to shape public opinion in Iraq extended to providing financial incentives to newspaper editors, to publish supposedly independent articles in fact written by the US military.¹³⁰ Gary Gambill argues that:

The most astonishing aspect of the scandal was not the breach of ethics on the part of the U.S. military (which also paid monthly stipends to bona-fide Iraqi journalists in return for favorable coverage), but the fact that a very broad cross-section of publications, including independent newspapers that had hitherto earned a measure of international respect, were revealed as willing to publish thinly disguised propaganda for a price.¹³¹

The *Los Angeles Times* reported furthermore in 2005 that: ‘as part of a psychological operations campaign that has intensified over the last year, the... [US Information Operations Task Force] had purchased an Iraqi newspaper and taken control of a

¹²⁶ Barker, ‘Democracy or Polyarchy’, p. 119.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ North, D., cited in Krane, J., ‘Pentagon Funds Pro-U.S. Network in Iraq’, *Associated Press*, 29/11/2003, at http://www.redorbit.com/news/general/34224/pentagon_funds_prou_network_in_iraq/, accessed 28/11/2012.

¹²⁹ North, D., cited in Margasak, L., ‘Former Journalism Adviser in Iraq Says U.S. Officials Steered Coverage to Themselves’, *Associated Press*, 14/2/2005, at <http://transcript.com/News/article.cfm?SourceCode=200502141i&t=Former+journalism+adviser+in+Iraq+says+US+officials+steered+coverage+to+themselves>, accessed 28/1/2012; See also ‘An Oversight Hearing on Waste, Fraud and Abuse in U.S. Government Contracting in Iraq - Don North, Former CPA Contractor’, US Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing, 14/2/2005, at <http://dpc.senate.gov/hearings/hearing19/north.pdf>, accessed 1/2/2012.

¹³⁰ Mazzetti, M., Daragahi, B., ‘U.S. Military Covertly Pays to Run Stories in Iraqi Press’, *Los Angeles Times*, 30/11/2005, at <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/nov/30/world/fg-infowar30>, accessed 1/2/2012.

¹³¹ Gambill, G., ‘The Iraqi Media’, *Global Journalist*, 14/5/2009, at <http://www.globaljournalist.org/stories/2009/05/14/the-iraqi-media/>, accessed 1/2/2012.

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radio station, and was using them to channel pro-American messages to the Iraqi public. Neither is identified as a military mouthpiece.¹³² These efforts were reinforced by an array of Iraqi exile newspapers that had returned to Iraq following the invasion, such as the INC's *Al-Moutamar* and Saad Al-Bazzaz's *Azzaman*, which generally treated the occupation in favourable terms.¹³³ Finally, this was accompanied by US attempts to suppress alternative voices in the media. For example Bremer controversially shut down the Iraqi newspaper *Al-Hawza*, seen as a mouthpiece for Shiite cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr, for allegedly inciting violence against coalition troops. Al-Sadr emerged early on as potent symbol of popular opposition to the US occupation, and arguably posed one of the most serious ideological threats to the US in Iraq, adopting an aggressively anti-Western stance and calling for the creation of an Islamic state.¹³⁴

As a central component of civil society, the Iraqi media proved an important focus of US attempts to foster support for its ideology. Barker notes that: 'between 2003 and 2005... [the NED] provided around \$325,000 for Iraqi *media and publishing* work. A further \$105,000 was allocated for activities for which *media and publishing* was just one component.'¹³⁵ This was particularly evident with reference to encouraging free market reforms, viewed by the US as a precondition for democratization. For example the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), one of the four core grantees of the NED, was provided with \$3 million to 'foster new business associations and business support organizations' in Iraq, an important aspect of which involved "[building] the information infrastructure to provide a platform for market democratic views".¹³⁶ This infrastructure included a television programme called 'Economic Files' and a radio programme called the 'Fountain of Economic Freedom'; the latter was to "serve as a platform for business people, policy makers, academics, media, and others to explain economic policy issues and critically assess

¹³² Mazzetti, Daragahi, 'U.S. Military Covertly Pays to Run Stories in Iraqi Press'.

¹³³ See Fisk, R., 'Iraq: News, But Not As We Know It', *Independent*, 7/10/2003, at <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=7886>, accessed 28/1/2012; Pallister, D., 'Media Mogul Accused of Running Saudi-Funded Propaganda Campaign', *Guardian*, 26/1/2005, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/jan/26/pressandpublishing.media>, accessed 28/1/2012.

¹³⁴ See Cockburn, P., *Muqtada: Muqtada Al-Sadr, the Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq*, Scribner, 2008.

¹³⁵ Barker, 'Democracy or Polyarchy', p. 122.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

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the progress of reforms”.¹³⁷ Hanieh claims that: ‘Another CIPE program in Iraq trains journalists to report on economic issues in order to “build support for market oriented economic policies”.’¹³⁸ In Iraqi Kurdistan, as early as 2001 the American Society for Kurds (ASK) ‘received \$40,000 from the NED to train 100 journalists in the rights, duties and role of journalists in democratic societies, and the following year they obtained a further \$74,000 to carry out a series of workshops on press-law reform.’¹³⁹ Barker argues that: ‘The role of ASK in promoting Iraqi polyarchy is perhaps best revealed by a 2005 workshop they co-hosted with the Center for International Private Enterprise... entitled *A Free Market and Democratic System in Iraq*.’¹⁴⁰

The educational system was another key emphasis of the US strategy of democracy promotion in Iraq. As in the Philippines in the early twentieth century, the US attempted to use the educational system to disseminate the promoted ideology, this time emphasizing ‘democracy’ and ‘free markets’ rather than ‘civilizing’ and ‘Christianity’.¹⁴¹ One of the main organisations involved in the reform of the Iraqi educational system was the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).¹⁴² The AFT is a labour union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO), the largest federation of American labour unions. The AFT explicitly states that it considers the ‘promotion of democracy and

¹³⁷ Hanieh, ““Democracy Promotion” and Neo-Liberalism in the Middle East”.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Barker, ‘Democracy or Polyarchy’, p. 119.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ This is discussed in Chapter Two; See also Constantino, R., ‘The Miseducation of the Filipino’, in Schirmer, D., Shalom, S., (eds.), *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance*, South End Press, 1987.

¹⁴² Another organisation involved in the reform of the Iraqi educational system was Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII). Kenneth Saltman notes that the initial USAID contract ‘called for CAII to distribute furniture and materials to schools, to train about 33,000 teachers in “student-centered” educational methods, administer a survey to evaluate the needs of secondary schools, create accelerated learning programs for 600 students, distribute grants for repairs to schools, and establish an information management system for the Ministry of Education.’ However, he argues that: ‘The second contract appears to set the stage for privatization of the Iraqi education system through “strengthening a decentralized education structure.” Such “decentralization” would foster a goal that USAID makes explicit on its website, “public-private partnerships”.’ See Saltman, K., ‘Creative Associates International: Corporate Education and “Democracy Promotion” in Iraq’, *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2006, p. 56. The latter was reflected in comments made by Majeed Allaq, the interim Iraqi Minister of Education, who argued that private schools were a means of expanding classrooms without using public funds, claiming that: ‘The citizen is realizing that not everything can be provided by the government.’ See Allaq, M., cited in Fields, R., ‘A Handful of Educators Testing Private Schools’, *Los Angeles Times*, 8/2/2005, at <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/feb/08/world/fg-schools8>, accessed 28/1/2012.

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human rights around the world to be a key mission of the international labor movement.’¹⁴³ Shortly after the invasion of Iraq, AFT education policy advisers proposed a civic education initiative entitled ‘Education for a Culture of Democracy in Iraq’.¹⁴⁴ The proposal stated:

Education reform will... be crucial for the reconstruction of a post-Saddam Iraq and its transition to a democratic society. The development of a modern education system in Iraq is important in the promotion of individual opportunity and economic development. A comprehensive education system available to all children could also serve to counter the potential development of Madrasas Islamist schools in Iraq by satisfying the demands of parents for good quality schools for their children. Positive reform in a sector of society that has an impact on such a broad segment of the population will therefore serve the interests of the United States, as well as those of Iraq.¹⁴⁵

The emphasis on political and economic reform, as well as countering Islamist influence, clearly corresponds with the broader US reform strategy. The AFT also conducted teacher training programs in Iraq. Maysoun Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock note:

In January 2005, the... [AFT] brought eleven Iraqi teachers from Baghdad to Amman, Jordan, for a two-week workshop to teach them “how to organize and operate a union in a democracy.” The workshop was “jointly coordinated and executed” by the AFT Educational Fund and the National Endowment for Democracy and had the stated goal of empowering workers, women especially, in the newly “liberated” Iraq.¹⁴⁶

Sandy Wiesmann, AFT’s Director of Affiliated Services, argued that: ‘After so many years under a closed, controlled society... [Iraqi teachers] were naive in terms of life

¹⁴³ ‘AFT in the World - Democracy and Human Rights’, at <http://www.aft.org/about/world/democracy-humanrights/index.cfm>, accessed 28/1/2012.

¹⁴⁴ Sukarieh, M., Tannock, S., ‘The American Federation of Teachers in the Middle East: Teacher Training as Labor Imperialism’, *Labor Studies Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (June) 2010, p. 194.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Education for a Culture of Democracy in Iraq - A Proposal for a National Civic Education Initiative’, AFT Educational Foundation & The Center for Civic Education, 2003, at http://old.civnet.org/contenidos.php?id_secciones=OA==&ACTION=TW9zdHJhc1VuQ29udGVuaWRv&pagina=NA==&id_contenido=Mzc=, accessed 28/1/2012.

¹⁴⁶ Sukarieh, Tannock, ‘The American Federation of Teachers in the Middle East’, p. 181.

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in a democracy, both rights and responsibilities... They had never experienced these things before.’¹⁴⁷ Accordingly ‘AFT trainers educated the Iraqi teachers in proper and democratic ways of “handling grievances, organizing, leadership skills and setting up a political agenda”, in order that they could “return [to Iraq] and share the skills they had learned with their colleagues”.’¹⁴⁸ This formed part of a wider, regional educational reform initiative on AFT’s behalf, which included training programs in Jordan, Yemen and Lebanon.¹⁴⁹

The AFT, as well as private companies such as CAII, have assumed a central role in US democracy promotion efforts worldwide, and by extension the pursuit of hegemony. As Sukarieh and Tannock argue:

provision of education and training has long been one of American labor’s pivotal points of entry for intervening in the labor movements and civil society of other countries... The AFL-CIO, along with other U.S. labor bodies, has run workshops and courses overseas for foreign trade unionists, set up regional training centers across the globe, and brought foreign union members to the United States to study in American universities and labor education programs.¹⁵⁰

The AFT made reference to its previous work in Nicaragua and Eastern Europe as a potential template for its civic education proposal in Iraq.¹⁵¹ CAII was also involved in Nicaragua and Haiti amongst others.¹⁵² Kenneth Saltman argues that: ‘CAII’s

¹⁴⁷ Wiesmann, S., cited in Sukarieh, Tannock, ‘The American Federation of Teachers in the Middle East’, p. 181.

¹⁴⁸ Sukarieh, Tannock, ‘The American Federation of Teachers in the Middle East’, p. 181.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹⁵⁰ Sukarieh, Tannock, ‘The American Federation of Teachers in the Middle East’, pp. 183-4.

¹⁵¹ ‘Education for a Culture of Democracy in Iraq - A Proposal for a National Civic Education Initiative’.

¹⁵² Steve Horblitt, CAII’s Director of External Relations, stated in a 2002 interview: ‘The government of Haiti continues its long history of not being a provider of services but an extractor. What happens in Haiti affects the United States... This administration needs to have a real clear reexamination of policy. The U.S. can help Haiti, but it can’t help without a partner there. We need to be very clear about our interests and our principles and we need to make it clear to that gentleman [President Jean-Bertrand Aristide] that we’re not playing.’ See Horblitt, S., cited in San Martin, N., ‘Haitians Search for “Way to Stability” / U.S. May be Forced to Act as Aristide’s Popularity Falts’, *Houston Chronicle*, 25/8/2002, at http://www.chron.com/CDA/archives/archive.mpl/2002_3575748/haitians-search-for-way-to-stability-u-s-may-be-fo.html, accessed 28/1/2012. CAII ‘works or has worked in Angola, El Salvador, Haiti, Afghanistan, Jordan, Benin, Guatemala, Lebanon, Liberia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, South Africa, Peru, Serbia and Montenegro.’ See Saltman, ‘Creative Associates International’, p. 35.

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history, for example, in support of the Contra guerillas in Nicaragua, highlights continuities in the role of education in aggressive U.S. foreign policy interventions... As the case of CAII illustrates, corporate educational development experts appear integral to U.S. economic and military strategy around the world.¹⁵³ He claims that: 'As the U.S. was developing a more sophisticated strategy to influence political process and educational apparatuses in the 1980s, CAII was there and has continued to be there funded by USAID and working in conjunction with other corporations and non-profit organizations.'¹⁵⁴ The above evidence the diverse range of actors that contribute to the US strategy of democracy promotion, as well as the scope, depth and continuity of this effort.

US Democracy Promotion in Iraq: The Failure of the Strategy?

The range of economic, political and civil society reforms implemented by the G. W. Bush administration should be seen as integral, complementary components of the overall US strategy of democracy promotion in Iraq. The main aims of this strategy were twofold. In the short-term, to facilitate the holding of elections to legitimize the US's preferred candidates, the underlying objective being the maintenance of stability under a more consensual system of governance. In the long-term, the aim was to facilitate the achievement of hegemony in Iraq and eventually the broader Middle East. But the chaos that enveloped Iraq after the US invasion made the realisation of these aims all but impossible. Faced with a rapidly intensifying insurgency, little support amongst the ordinary population, and substantial pressures from the Shia clerical elite, the US was forced to prematurely transfer sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government in June 2004.¹⁵⁵ The transfer of sovereignty was in effect an attempt to establish a viable 'exit strategy', one that would allow the US to withdraw as soon as possible, but without abandoning the Iraqi state prematurely. This was followed by elections in January 2005 for a parliamentary body to draft a

¹⁵³ Saltman, 'Creative Associates International', p. 27.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 27-8.

¹⁵⁵ This meant that the balance of power in Iraq shifted rapidly in favour of the Shia majority, and against the Sunni minority which had dominated Iraq under Hussein. Juan Cole subsequently observed: 'the likelihood is that Shiite religious politics are going to be a dominant force in Iraq for some years to come.' See Cole, J., cited in Cole, J., Katzman, K., Sadjadpour, K., Takeyh, R., 'A Shia Crescent: What Fallout for the U.S.?', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XII, No. 4, (Winter) 2005, p. 4. In terms of US interests, this is of particular concern given the presence on Iraq's borders of Shiite Iran, which following the overthrow of Hussein emerged as the 'main regional military power in the Gulf.' See Kam, E., 'The War In Iraq: Regional Implications', in Feldman, S., (ed.), *After the War in Iraq*, Sussex Academic Press, 2003, p. 10.

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new constitution, and then in December 2005 to elect an inaugural National Assembly. In the latter elections the US's early favourite, Ahmed Chalabi's INC, failed to win even a single seat.¹⁵⁶ Instead it was dominated by the United Iraqi Alliance, a broad-based Shiite electoral coalition 'formed to promote Islamic observance at the heart of the state.'¹⁵⁷ This was in stark contrast to the US's original plan of transferring sovereignty to Iraq only after a permanent constitution had been written, and an elite-based democratic government established.¹⁵⁸ As Bremer initially stated: 'The only path to true Iraqi sovereignty is through a written constitution, ratified and followed by free democratic elections.'¹⁵⁹ This was because the G. W. Bush administration was concerned that a constitution drafted by elected Iraqi representatives would not produce the desired outcome. Chandrasekaran argues that:

Although Bremer had pledged that the charter would be "written by Iraqis for Iraqis", he was adamantly opposed to holding elections because he feared a roomful of popularly elected Iraqis might not produce a document that endorsed a separation of mosque and state, provided equal rights for women, or enshrined any of the other elements sought by the White House, which wanted to be able to point to Iraq as a model of an enlightened democracy in the Arab world.¹⁶⁰

The failure of the US intervention in Iraq also extended to the array of economic reforms it had proposed. Ali Allawi, the interim Iraqi trade minister, claimed that: 'there was not one [Iraqi] voice raised in support of the CPA's economic plans.'¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Dodge argues: 'The Iraqi politicians who returned with US troops had expected to be welcomed as those who had worked hardest for regime change. Instead they found a population generally suspicious of their close links to the US government and resentful that they had remained outside the country during the harsh conditions of the 1990s; they were seen as opportunistic 'carpetbaggers'. Off the record many of the more candid formerly exiled politicians admitted that they had been surprised by the difficulties they faced after returning. Instead of being welcomed they found a sullen and suspicious population who have largely refused to offer political loyalty to the newly returned parties.' See Dodge, 'Iraqi Transitions', p. 713.

¹⁵⁷ The most prominent parties in the United Iraqi Alliance were the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Islamic Dawa Party. Both espoused a radical Shiite Islamic doctrine, while maintaining close links with Iran. See Dodge, T., 'The Sardinian, the Texan and the Tikriti: Gramsci, The Comparative Autonomy of the Middle Eastern State and Regime Change in Iraq', *International Politics*, Vol. 43, Issue 4, (September) 2006, p. 468.

¹⁵⁸ Diamond, L., 'What Went Wrong in Iraq', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 5, 2004.

¹⁵⁹ Bremer, P., cited in Chandrasekaran, *Green Zone*, p. 210.

¹⁶⁰ Chandrasekaran, *Green Zone*, p. 207.

¹⁶¹ Allawi, A., cited in Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, 'Hard Lessons'.

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The radical free market experiment instituted in Iraq therefore failed completely.¹⁶² As Darel Paul argues: ‘At the dissolution of the... [CPA and direct US rule] in June 2004, no American firm had made a substantial capital investment in Iraq. Even transnational oil firms, thought by many to be the primary beneficiaries of Saddam’s overthrow, invested nothing in Iraq during the formal occupation.’¹⁶³ One of Bremer’s aides told Chandrasekaran: ‘We were so busy trying to build a Jeffersonian democracy and a capitalist economy that we neglected the big picture. We squandered an enormous opportunity, and we didn’t realize it until everything blew up in our faces.’¹⁶⁴ In the face of exponentially rising violence, the US had effectively lost control over the strategy of democracy promotion. It subsequently failed to secure one of its key strategic aims in Iraq, namely to facilitate a transition from authoritarian governance to elite-based democracy.

There were two central failures on the part of the US, which gave rise first to the insurgency, and then eventually the defeat of its main strategic objectives in Iraq. First, the US failed to stabilise occupied Iraq, at least beyond the confines of Baghdad’s ‘Green Zone’ where the CPA was based. Christoph Wilcke claims: ‘strategic incompetence in post-war planning and fundamental misunderstanding of Iraqi society created facts on the ground that rendered all the good will of – and toward – the US for building democracy irrelevant.’¹⁶⁵ The US occupation’s insular nature, namely its isolation from the ordinary Iraqi people, its failure to ‘internationalise’ the occupation and reconstruction process early on, and furthermore its inability to provide even a basic level of security, are some of the

¹⁶² Paul, D., ‘The Siren Song of Geopolitics: Towards a Gramscian Account of the Iraq War’, *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2007, p. 59.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Cited in Chandrasekaran, *Green Zone*, p. 309.

¹⁶⁵ Wilcke, C., ‘Castles Built of Sand: US Governance and Exit Strategies in Iraq’, *Middle East Report*, No. 232, (Fall) 2004, at <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer232/castles-built-sand-us-governance-exit-strategies-iraq>, accessed 29/1/2012; Condoleezza Rice claimed that: ‘The concept was that we would defeat the army, but the institutions would hold, everything from ministries to police forces.’ See Rice, C., cited in Dodge, *Iraq’s Future*, p. 28; A report written in 2005 for Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld concluded that: ‘Post conflict stabilization and reconstruction were addressed only very generally, largely because of the prevailing view that the task would not be difficult... No planning was undertaken to provide for the security of the Iraqi people in the post conflict environment, given the expectations that the Iraqi government would remain largely intact; the Iraqi people would welcome the American presence; and local militia, police, and the regular army would be capable of providing law and order.’ See ‘Iraq: Translating Lessons into Future DoD Policies’, Memorandum to Donald Rumsfeld, RAND Corporation, 7/2/2005, cited in Paul, ‘The Siren Song of Geopolitics’, p. 59.

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reasons for this failure.¹⁶⁶ Wilcke concludes that these crises ‘conspired slowly to reduce US ambitions of governance in Iraq from democratization to consensual advisory representation to mere stabilization.’¹⁶⁷ Second, the US failed to establish an appropriate political process for the transition of power, acceptable to the key Iraqi constituencies. This was a central failure, as it gave rise to perceptions of the US occupation as quasi-imperialist, which further galvanised the insurgency. The US had monopolised political power through the CPA from May 2003 to June 2004. But the CPA lacked legitimacy in the eyes of Iraqi society, and a significant ‘source of alienation was the CPA attempt to dictate the terms of Iraqi participation in the polity of the future.’¹⁶⁸ Wilcke argues that:

the occupation’s legitimacy deficit can be traced to two trends in national and local governance. Instead of holding free elections, the US appointed national and local councils to govern at its behest. Instead of nurturing the popular legitimacy of these councils, the occupation authority opted for representational formulas based on the sectarian and ethnic composition of the country.¹⁶⁹

The latter reinforced ethnic and sectarian divisions in Iraq, establishing these affiliations as ‘the organizing principle of Iraqi politics for the first time.’¹⁷⁰ Dodge cites this ‘primordialisation of Iraqi society’ as the ‘most destructive discursive mistake made by US administrators once on the ground.’¹⁷¹ He claims that:

Influenced by the former opposition parties, principally the Iraqi National Congress, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Iraqi

¹⁶⁶ Wilcke, ‘Castles Built of Sand’.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. As head of the CPA, Bremer was responsible for the introduction of two policies integral to the destabilisation of occupied Iraq: the dissolution of the national army and the de-Ba’athification of the state. See Ibid. These policies undermined the Iraqi state’s ability to function even at a basic level, whilst also ‘effectively disenfranchising those most likely to resent the new order’, and therefore served as a catalyst for the Iraqi insurgency. See Aylwin-Foster, ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom Phase 4’, p. 6. A number of other factors contributed to the insurgency’s growth, including the US’s aggressive counterinsurgency tactics, the Abu Ghraib scandal, and the siege of Falluja. Perhaps the US’s central mistake in addressing the insurgency was first attributing it to Ba’athist and criminal elements, and then increasingly to outside forces such as Al-Qaeda. This attempt to de-legitimise the insurgency meant that the US could not seek any form of political dialogue with the insurgents, making it reliant on coercion alone.

¹⁶⁸ Wilcke, ‘Castles Built of Sand’.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Dodge, ‘Iraqi Transitions’, p. 719.

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society was perceived as irrevocably divided along ethnic and religious lines. By using this understanding to create the Interim Iraqi Governing Council, by deploying a very rough and ready consociationalism, the CPA has encouraged a sectarian dynamic that may yet come to dominate Iraqi politics.¹⁷²

The transfer of sovereignty in June 2004 therefore signalled the effective defeat of the US in Iraq, and the beginning of the end of the strategy of democracy promotion there. As Robinson argued:

The Bush regime... hopes a “transition to democracy” will provide a viable “exit strategy.” But this is close to impossible, a veritable imperial pipedream... If the Iraq invasion and occupation is the most massive US intervention since Vietnam, it is also the most stunning – indeed, insurmountable – chasm that we have seen since Washington’s Indochina quagmire between US intent, on the one hand, and the actual US ability, on the other hand, to control events and outcomes.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Dodge, ‘Iraqi Transitions’, p. 719.

¹⁷³ Robinson, ‘What to Expect from US “Democracy Promotion” in Iraq’, p. 447.

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Conclusion

The achievement of a Gramscian hegemony is an organic process, whereby coercion is replaced by consensualism, the promoted ideology internalised voluntarily by society itself as the natural order. This is an ‘ideational and institutional process’, conducted within the boundaries of civil society, which results in the formulation of a ‘new ruling consensus.’¹⁷⁴ This did not take place in Iraq, despite the best intentions of the G. W. Bush administration. The violence of the Iraqi invasion and occupation rendered the US effort near impossible from the outset. And this without accounting for the multiple political, economic, social and cultural impediments to democratisation and the achievement of hegemony. As Sabah Kadhim, a senior official at the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, concluded: ‘Outside solutions won’t work here. It has to be an Iraqi solution. They should have let the Iraqis develop these laws themselves rather than imposing laws imported from America.’¹⁷⁵ An interesting argument is made by Dodge:

Following Gramsci, the extended deployment of coercion or the use of conflict by one group to defeat another is used to make sure that the conditions exist for hegemony to develop. It may well be that George W. Bush’s resort to violence against Iraq in March 2003 can be explained by the global limits of a hegemony developed at the core to shape the periphery of the international system. It is the inability of ideology and institutions alone to generate the levels of consent needed to secure US hegemony over the states of the Middle East that led to the invasion.¹⁷⁶

Nonetheless, the US strategy of democracy promotion in Iraq is more accurately viewed as an attempt to directly transplant the political and economic institutions that comprise the American liberal democratic system, the physical manifestations as such, rather than fostering the growth of the underlying norms and values that underpin this system, and whose acceptance by society as ‘natural’ is central to the process of hegemony. The only possible exception has been in northern Iraq, where the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government has adopted a largely pro-

¹⁷⁴ Dodge, ‘The Sardinian, the Texan and the Tikriti’, p. 456.

¹⁷⁵ Kadhim, S., cited in Chandrasekaran, *Green Zone*, p. 268.

¹⁷⁶ Dodge, ‘The Sardinian, the Texan and the Tikriti’, p. 457.

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Western perspective, emphasizing free-market economics and gradual democratisation. Little has subsequently changed in Iraq itself. As one Iraqi security officer put it: ‘The system now is just like under Saddam: walk by the wall, don’t go near politics and you can walk with your head high and not fear anything. But if you come close to the throne then the wrath of Allah will fall on you and we have eyes everywhere.’¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Cited in Abdul-Ahad, G., ‘Corruption in Iraq: Your Son is Being Tortured. He Will Die if You Don’t Pay’, *Guardian*, 16/1/2012, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/16/corruption-iraq-son-tortured-pay>, accessed 1/2/2012.

Chapter Six

US Democracy Promotion in Kuwait

Chapter Six

‘We need to be trained in the process of democracy. It doesn’t occur overnight.’¹

– *Former Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Abdullah Bishara*

Introduction

Kuwait is situated on the shores of the Persian Gulf, sharing borders with Iraq and Saudi Arabia.² Its geography arches ‘across the narrow, oil-rich mouth of the Persian Gulf right in between Saudi Arabia, to the southwest, and Iraq and Iran, to the northeast’, making it crucial to calculations of regional security.³ Mshari Al-Dhaydi comments that: ‘Kuwait is a platform from which one can see the burning palm trees of Iraq, and the Iranian reactors which are about to burn – as well as the sands of the Arabian Peninsula.’⁴ As a result of its geostrategic location, and the vast oil reserves that lie within its borders, Kuwait emerged as an increasingly important US interest over the years. During the Cold War, Kuwait maintained relations with both East and West, preferring to chart a middle path where possible.⁵ It was only after Kuwait’s occupation by Iraq in 1990, and the war launched by the US to liberate it, that the foundations of the contemporary US-Kuwaiti relationship were established. The Persian Gulf War of 1991, the first major conflict of the post-Cold War era, found Kuwait at its epicentre, starkly demonstrating its vulnerability and ultimately its dependency on the US.

This chapter will argue that while the G. H. W. Bush administration demanded political reforms as a condition of liberating Kuwait in 1991, under the Clinton and

¹ Bishara, A., cited in Yetiv, S., ‘Kuwait’s Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context’, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 2, (Spring) 2002, p. 268.

² Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary emirate. It can be described almost as a city-state, with ninety per cent of its three million population residing within Kuwait City. With native Kuwaiti citizens totalling around one million, it is important to note that the majority of the population is comprised of non-citizens. These are mainly expatriates, including Arabs, South and East Asians, but also the Bidun, around 100,000 stateless persons residing within Kuwait without citizenship. See ‘Population of Kuwait’, at http://www.e.gov.kw/sites/kgoenglish/portal/Pages/Visitors/AboutKuwait/KuwaitAtaGlance_Population.aspx, accessed 6/4/2012.

³ Pollock, D., ‘Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy’, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, No. 76, (November) 2007, p. 1.

⁴ Al-Dhaydi, M., ‘Al-Kuwait: Awd Ala Bid’, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 17/4/2007, cited in Pollock, ‘Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy’, p. 1.

⁵ Kuwait joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1964, and consistently charted an independent foreign policy until 1990, one of the few Arab states to do so. See Guazzone, L., ‘Kuwait’s National Security Policy and its Influence on the Gulf Region’, *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1989, p. 63.

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G. W. Bush administrations emphasis was placed on maintaining Kuwait's stability over the near-term, in the face of regional tensions and crises. First the chapter will account for the development of the US-Kuwaiti relationship, focusing on the G. H. W. Bush and Clinton administrations' approaches to Kuwait in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War, and their respective stances towards political reform. It will then address the G. W. Bush administration's policy to Kuwait, amidst the invasion and occupation of neighbouring Iraq, and its approach to democracy promotion in Kuwait. Finally, the chapter will offer an evaluation of the strategy of democracy promotion in Kuwait.

Chapter Six

The US and Kuwait: The Development of a Strategic Relationship

The G. H. W. Bush Administration: The Liberation of Kuwait

Much in the same way that the US-Egyptian relationship has been inherently influenced by Israel, the US-Kuwaiti relationship has been similarly determined by the presence of Iraq and to a lesser extent Iran on its borders.⁶ The US's posture towards these two key regional actors has had a significant impact on its relationship with Kuwait over the years. In many ways Kuwait has been seemingly overshadowed by the various crises associated with these neighbouring states – by the Iran-Iraq war during the Reagan administration, the 'containment' of Iran and Iraq during the Clinton administration, and by the invasion of Iraq under the G. W. Bush administration. It was only during the Persian Gulf War and the liberation of Kuwait by G. H. W. Bush, that Kuwait found itself at the forefront of US regional concerns. It subsequently materialised into a central US interest, but even then in large part because of considerations of its proximity to Iraq and Iran. The contemporary US-Kuwaiti relationship was initiated during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88, in which both the US and Kuwait supported Iraq. As Kenneth Katzman notes: 'Kuwait, the first Gulf state to establish relations with the Soviet Union in the 1960s, was not particularly close to the United States until the Iran-Iraq war.'⁷ This changed fundamentally in 1987, when Kuwait sought protection for its shipping from retaliatory Iranian attacks. Sami Hajjar argues that: 'Kuwait sought help from the permanent members of the UNSC [United Nations Security Council], and, when the Soviet Union offered to charter Kuwaiti tankers, the United States reversed an earlier decision and decided to place the tankers under its flag and protection.'⁸ This decision ultimately established the nature of Kuwait's emerging relationship with the US, with Kuwait positioned firmly in the role of the dependent.⁹

⁶ See Chapter Four for further details on the US-Egyptian relationship and Israel.

⁷ Katzman, K., 'Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy', *CRS Report for Congress*, 9/12/2009, p. 6.

⁸ Hajjar, S., 'U.S. Military Presence in the Gulf: Challenges and Prospects', *Strategic Studies Institute*, (March) 2002, p. 19.

⁹ This was true for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states as a whole. The GCC is a sub-regional, consultative association comprised of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. See Pollock, 'Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy', p. 1.

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The US-Kuwaiti relationship was consolidated following Iraq's attempt to annex Kuwait in August 1990. The invasion itself was motivated by several factors, including a historical claim to Kuwait dating to the Ottoman era, Kuwait's substantial oil reserves, and \$60 billion worth of Iraqi debt incurred during the Iran-Iraq war. But Saddam Hussein shrewdly justified the invasion in political terms, citing Amir Jaber III's dissolution of the National Assembly in 1986, and claiming to be supporting a popular uprising of the Kuwaiti people against the monarchy.¹⁰ While this claim was both absurd and moreover hypocritical, the invasion nonetheless highlighted the authoritarian character of Kuwait's government to an international audience. Thus in the immediate aftermath of the Iraqi invasion, there was some reluctance to use force to reinstate the Al-Sabah, both on the part of US policy-makers and the wider public. President G. H. W. Bush recalled:

There were those in Congress and the public who took exception to our goals. Some argued that we had no real national interest in restoring Kuwait's rulers. I found it very frustrating. "The Kuwaitis are rich," the reasoning went. "They're not democratic. We have no stake in the restoration of their rulers. The people of Kuwait should choose. We ought to call for UN-sponsored elections in Kuwait".¹¹

The Al-Sabah were acutely aware of these perceptions. Steve Yetiv notes that: 'The Kuwaiti leadership understood full well that perceptions of Kuwait as non-democratic were damaging... [They] hired several US public relations firms, spending more than \$11 million. Such efforts were clearly aimed at altering Kuwait's image as a state that lacked democracy and treated women as second-class citizens.'¹² As former GCC Secretary-General Abdullah Bishara has claimed:

¹⁰ Yetiv, 'Kuwait's Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context', p. 266.

¹¹ Bush, G. H. W., in Bush, G. H. W., Scowcroft, B., *A World Transformed*, First Vintage Books, 1999, p. 358. Andrew Rosenthal claimed that: 'Since the early days of the gulf crisis, Administration officials have been acutely aware that the Kuwaiti political system would be a difficult political issue for Mr. Bush. For months, they have taken pains to counter arguments that the United States was sending American troops into combat to restore an absolute ruler to his throne, asserting instead that there were larger issues of international law at stake.' See Rosenthal, A., 'After the War; Bush Not Pressing Kuwait on Reform', *New York Times*, 3/4/1991, at <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/04/03/world/after-the-war-bush-not-pressing-kuwait-on-reform.html>, accessed 9/5/2012.

¹² Yetiv, 'Kuwait's Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context', p. 259.

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‘Kuwait needs “to be worth saving and respecting,” and becoming more democratic is one way to accomplish this goal.’¹³

Yet one of the US’s primary concerns during the Gulf crisis was in fact the security of Saudi Arabia. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney argued: ‘You can’t separate Kuwait from Saudi Arabia. When the Iraqis hit the Saudi border, they’re only forty kilometres from the Saudi oil fields. We have the potential here for a major conflict.’¹⁴ Possession of both Kuwaiti and Saudi oil fields would have given Hussein control over the vast majority of the world’s reserves – an unacceptable scenario for the US. Hassan Al-Ebraheem, Kuwait’s former education minister, claimed that: ‘We have every reason to believe that... [Hussein’s] intention was to move on to Saudi Arabia from Kuwait. The unexpectedly strong reaction from the United States led to the collapse of this plan.’¹⁵ Thus after months of negotiations, in January 1991 a US-led coalition comprised of both Western and Arab states launched a military initiative to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait.¹⁶ President G. H. W. Bush stated: ‘With great reluctance, I concluded, as did the other coalition leaders, that only the use of armed force would achieve an Iraqi withdrawal together with the other U.N. goals of *restoring Kuwait’s legitimate government*, protecting the lives of our citizens, and reestablishing security and stability in the Persian Gulf’ (emphasis added).¹⁷ This statement was crucial, as it demonstrated the US’s acceptance of the

¹³ Bishara, A., cited in Yetiv, ‘Kuwait’s Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context’, p. 259.

¹⁴ Cheney, D., cited in Panaspornprastit, C., *US-Kuwaiti Relations, 1961-1992: An Uneasy Relationship*, Routledge, 2005, p. 126.

¹⁵ Al-Ebraheem, H., cited in Panaspornprastit, *US-Kuwaiti Relations, 1961-1992*, p. 126.

¹⁶ Amir Jaber III stated: ‘I am duty bound to praise the decisive role played by the Government and the people of the United States of America in standing up to aggression and standing against it. This American stand was not born out of nothing. You are children of your ancestors, who were the early settlers who centuries ago chose to risk and endanger their lives by emigrating to a distant and unknown world rather than submit to oppression and the chaining of freedom. Their hopes in building a free world rejecting humiliation and tyranny have been realised. It has become a shelter for all who love freedom.’ Al-Sabah, J., cited in Panaspornprastit, *US-Kuwaiti Relations, 1961-1992*, p. 129. The Al-Sabah financed the military effort which restored them to power. Katzman notes that: ‘Kuwait contributed materially to the 1991 war and subsequent containment efforts – it paid \$16.059 billion to offset the costs of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, funded two-thirds of the \$51 million per year U.N. budget for the 1991-2003 Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM) that monitored the Iraq-Kuwait border, and contributed about \$350 million per year for U.S. military costs of Kuwait-based Iraq containment operations. This included the 1992-2003 enforcement of a “no fly zone” over southern Iraq (Operation Southern Watch), involving 1,000 Kuwait-based U.S. Air Force personnel.’ See Katzman, ‘Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy’, p. 6.

¹⁷ Bush, G. H. W., ‘Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Persian Gulf Conflict’, 18/1/1991, at http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2633&year=1991&month=01, accessed 6/4/2012.

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Al-Sabah monarchy as the legitimate representative of the Kuwaiti people, an affirmation which, alongside the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty, led to the reinstatement of the House of Al-Sabah.¹⁸

The liberation of Kuwait proved to be the turning point for the US-Kuwaiti relationship.¹⁹ Kuwait was elevated from a peripheral interest to a central concern, with the US firmly established as its security guarantor.²⁰ This however entailed substantial expectations of political reform within Kuwait. As Yetiv argues: 'Explicit, implicit, and perceived external pressures in the post-war period influenced the regime in the direction of democratic reform and energized the pro-democracy movement.'²¹ He claims that: 'The Bush administration pressed the Amir to re-establish the parliament which had been fairly elected according to Kuwait's 1962 Constitution, but which he dissolved in 1986. In late March 1991, Bush even sent the Amir a letter emphasizing the need to pursue "political reconstruction".'²² The term 'democracy' itself though was purposefully avoided by the G. H. W. Bush administration. This was because of the US's ongoing engagement of authoritarian allies such as neighbouring Saudi Arabia, the domestic tensions which emerged following liberation within Kuwait, and also Iraq, where the Shia and the Kurds had risen up against Hussein.²³

Kuwait's stability, underpinned by the continuity of the Al-Sabah, was paramount to the G. H. W. Bush administration at this point. But the Administration did believe that reforms were necessary, primarily to quell Kuwait's domestic tensions, which

¹⁸ G. H. W. Bush called for 'the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government to replace the puppet regime installed by Iraq' in National Security Directive (NSD) 45. See NSC, 'U.S. Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait', NSD 45, 20/8/1990, at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB39/document2.pdf>, accessed 18/9/2012.

¹⁹ It marked a significant turnaround in Kuwait's orientation, which of the GCC states had been the most sympathetic to the Soviet Union and critical of the US during the 1980s. See Yetiv, 'Kuwait's Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context', p. 258. As Nathaniel Howell, US Ambassador to Kuwait during the occupation observed: 'the [post-war] relationship is going to be an important one which needs to be nurtured. Kuwaitis like Americans. They are a lot closer.' See Howell, N., cited in Panaspornprastit, *US-Kuwaiti Relations, 1961-1992*, p. 121.

²⁰ Kuwait promptly signed a ten-year defence agreement with the US. But so as to retain a measure of independence, it also signed agreements with the other permanent members of the UNSC – Britain, France, Russia and China.

²¹ Yetiv, 'Kuwait's Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context', p. 259.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 259-60.

²³ Rosenthal, 'After the War; Bush Not Pressing Kuwait on Reform'.

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centred on popular demands for change.²⁴ This message was underscored by Secretary of State James Baker, who visited Kuwait in April 1991 to stress the need for political and human rights reforms. He stated that progress in these areas would enhance: ‘the ability of the United States to continue to support Kuwait politically and from a security standpoint in a manner in which we supported them against the brutal aggression of Saddam Hussein.’²⁵ The implications of this statement are clear. As Yetiv argues: ‘While other countries in the Gulf may be able to stay autocratic, Kuwaiti elites are acutely aware that the “international spotlight” remains on Kuwait, which means that the regime will have to make “greater strides toward democracy”.’²⁶

By calling for political reform in Kuwait, the US was advocating a more consensual mode of governance, capable of quelling domestic tensions and further instability, although not necessarily ‘democracy’ per se. At the heart of these demands lay the National Assembly. The parliamentary body had been unconstitutionally suspended by the Amir from 1976 to 1981, and then from 1986 through the Iraqi invasion in 1990. As Nathan Brown notes: ‘During those suspensions, Kuwait was ruled like other Gulf monarchies – by an unaccountable ruling family. Popular pressure to restore the parliament in 1989 provoked only an attempt to revise the constitution and replace the parliament with a more pliant assembly.’²⁷ Kuwait nonetheless differs from both the Gulf and the wider Middle East, in that it has had a long tradition of ‘consultative government, constitutionalism, and participatory politics’ unique to the region.²⁸ While clearly not democratic in a Western sense, a non-violent, deliberative framework of governance has characterised Kuwait’s politics since its early days.²⁹ This was reflected in the fact that demands for political reform

²⁴ These demands broadly included reforms to the structure of the political system, for example an independent judiciary and an end to the established arrangement of the position of prime minister being held by the crown prince; reforms to the economy, such as combating corruption and limiting foreign labour; and reforms to the bureaucracy, so as to introduce more governmental accountability. See Tétreault, M., *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait*, Columbia University Press, 2000, p. 106.

²⁵ Kempster, N., ‘Baker Cautions Kuwait on Rights’, *Los Angeles Times*, 23/4/1991, at http://articles.latimes.com/1991-04-23/news/mn-641_1_political-reform, accessed 6/4/2012.

²⁶ Yetiv, ‘Kuwait’s Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context’, p. 259.

²⁷ Brown, N., ‘Kuwaiti Democracy in Crisis’, *Islam Online*, 16/5/2009, at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2009/05/18/kuwaiti%2Ddemocracy%2Din%2Dcrisis/97k>, accessed 3/3/2012.

²⁸ Salem, P., ‘Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate’, *Carnegie Papers*, No. 3, (June) 2007, p. 1.

²⁹ This originated in a mid-eighteenth century agreement between the predecessors of the current ruling family and leading Kuwaiti merchant families, under which it was agreed that the Al-Sabah

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were already widespread amongst the Kuwaiti population before the events of 1990. Kuwait can therefore be seen in contrast to the other case studies presented in this thesis. As Paul Salem argues:

Gradual and negotiated reform has been part of the practice and legacy of Kuwaiti politics for the past century. Politics has often been a fairly fluid process based on power balances, negotiation, and accommodation. Reform – in the sense of issue-specific, domestic change – has been a focus of political activism and pressure in postliberation Kuwaiti politics in ways quite different from other Arab countries, where the discourse is much more radical and general.³⁰

An important point to bear in mind is that this was by no means a result of external efforts. As Salem elaborates:

Reform has not been imported from abroad, nor is it an ill-fitting vestige of colonial influence. To be sure, Kuwait does not exist in a vacuum, and constitutional ideas that swept the Middle East in the 1930s and 1940s found their way into the constitution of 1962; similarly, the U.S. liberation of Kuwait in 1991 influenced post-liberation politics. All these influences, however, have played into a pre-existing reality of a

would rule the city of Kuwait. See Salem, 'Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate', p. 1. This arrangement was institutionalised with the adoption of the Kuwaiti Constitution, following independence from Britain in 1961. Ghanim Alnajjar claims that: 'The Constitution was produced through an agreement between the ruler and the elected representatives of the people. There are several weak points in the Constitution, but generally, it upholds most of the principles that exist in most Western democracies, such as the separation of powers, respect for individual freedoms, the rule of law, and the like. The weaknesses of the Constitution are mainly confined to the relationship between the executive and legislative branches, where the executive is given much more weight.' See Alnajjar, G., 'The Challenges Facing Kuwaiti Democracy', *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 2, (Spring) 2000, p. 254. See also Tristram, P., 'Kuwait's Parliamentary Democracy Explained', at <http://middleeast.about.com/od/kuwait/a/kuwaiti-democracy.htm>, accessed 7/4/2012.

³⁰ Salem outlines a number of reasons for this: 'First, there is a fairly wide consensus within Kuwait in support of the basic outlines of the political system: respecting the rule of the Sabah family, the constitution, basic freedoms, and the political process. Second, there has been a fair margin of public space throughout the past decades to develop and refine reform ideas. Third, the state has not radicalized the opposition through repression and persecution but rather moderated it through accommodation and participation. Fourth, authoritarian regimes in Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia have continually served as a sobering example for Kuwait. Fifth, the Iraqi invasion and the support of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) for the invasion shattered the credibility of panArabist ideology and reinforced Kuwaiti nationalism. In a sense, Kuwait's focus on domestic reform is not only the result of its political traditions and history, but also the result of its inoculation against the temptations or illusions of the ideologies that have seized other political communities in the region.' See Salem, 'Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate', p. 13.

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country where there have always been several centers of power.³¹

US demands for political reform in Kuwait were therefore accompanied by popular pressures for change, which were gathering momentum following liberation. As Mohammed Al-Qadiri, a former Kuwaiti ambassador, argued just before the Amir's return to Kuwait in 1991: 'Everyone is delighted that the emir is returning but we want change... The new Kuwait should be built on democracy.'³²

A broad-based, diverse opposition movement calling for the reinstatement of the National Assembly had emerged prior to the Iraqi invasion.³³ The end of the Iran-Iraq war, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent processes of democratisation in Eastern Europe, as well as the beginning of the first Palestinian *Intifada*, all encouraged popular demands for a restoration of parliament.³⁴ But more immediate concerns were also a factor, such as the widespread perception of the Kuwaiti government as corrupt, inept and unresponsive.³⁵ While the Iraqi invasion put a halt to the reform campaign within Kuwait itself, in exile the opposition movement continued to press for concessions. In an attempt to rally popular support and furthermore demonstrate their legitimacy to an international audience, the Al-Sabah called a conference of exiles in Jidda, Saudi Arabia in October 1990.³⁶ This led to a renegotiation of the established Kuwaiti social contract. In return for the opposition's loyalty, and specifically their support for the continuity of the monarchy after liberation, the Al-Sabah pledged to restore the constitution and hold

³¹ Salem, 'Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate', p. 18.

³² Al-Qadiri, M., cited in 'Emir Returns to Kuwait as Bush Pursues Peace', *United Press International*, 14/3/1991, at <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/151700/emir-returns-to-kuwait-as-bush-pursues-peace.html>, accessed 12/4/2012.

³³ Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, pp. 67-8.

³⁴ Lori Plotkin Boghardt argues that: 'The Iran-Iraq ceasefire and the increase perceived by the Kuwaiti public in regional and domestic stability that accompanied it, as well as other internal and external factors, contributed to the evolution of a popular campaign to reinstitute Kuwaiti parliamentary life. The significant challenge that the movement represented for the leadership was indicated by the unusually heavy-handed approach to control it, including banning certain types of *diwaniyyas*; using force to suppress non-violent citizen demonstrations at the homes of private individuals; and arresting prominent parliamentary movement leaders and well-respected members of Kuwaiti society for hosting and speaking at pro-parliament gatherings.' See Plotkin Boghardt, L., *Kuwait Amid War, Peace and Revolution: 1979-1991 and New Challenges*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 145.

³⁵ Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, pp. 67-8.

³⁶ Brown, N., 'Pushing Toward Party Politics? Kuwait's Islamic Constitutional Movement', *Carnegie Papers*, No. 79, (January) 2007, p. 7.

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parliamentary elections.³⁷ Mary Ann Tétreault argues that: ‘The October Jidda meeting was a political gamble for the government, but it paid off. The apparent harmony between the government and the opposition pacified leaders of coalition governments, especially the United States, initially worried about the strength and depth of the regime’s commitment to democratization.’³⁸ This promise was ultimately short-lived. In the immediate aftermath of Kuwait’s liberation the Al-Sabah imposed martial law, abrogating civil rights and meting out violence, the latter disproportionately targeting the Palestinian and Bidun minorities.³⁹ Tétreault describes this as the ‘reimposition of Al Sabah hegemony over Kuwaiti domestic politics’ – a move which prompted fierce anger from the opposition and broad sections of the population.⁴⁰

These domestic tensions had significant implications for Kuwait’s stability over the long-term. In the aftermath of the Iraqi occupation: ‘most insiders... [were] less intimidated by their government than they were in the past. As so many of them put it, “We aren’t afraid of the Sabah. We survived Saddam Hussein”.’⁴¹ Dissatisfaction with the Al-Sabah’s handling of the invasion, their absence during the occupation, and their resistance to reform afterwards, all contributed to an opposition that represented a growing threat to their continuity. Lori Plotkin Boghardt argues that: ‘During the immediate post-war period, this resentment and desire for reform metamorphosed into explicit security challenges for the leadership from the Kuwaiti community.’⁴² She identifies the parliamentary reform movement as posing the most significant challenge to the Al-Sabah, because ‘the movement attracted broad popular support by operating under an established organizational framework and absorbing new reform demands into the traditional parliamentary movement platform.’⁴³ With the re-emergence of authoritarian rule in Kuwait viewed with

³⁷ Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, p. 85.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³⁹ The Palestinians and the Bidun, residents within Kuwait but lacking citizenship, were tarnished on masse as collaborators with the Iraqi occupation. See Lesch, A., ‘A Scarred Society’, *Middle East Report*, No. 172, (September/October) 1991, at http://www.merip.org/mer/mer_172/scarred-society, accessed 30/5/2012. The PLO chairman Yasser Arafat’s support of the Iraqi invasion led to a reversal of Kuwait’s staunch advocacy of the Palestinian cause. Following liberation the Al-Sabah expelled almost all of the 400,000 Palestinians residing in Kuwait.

⁴⁰ Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, pp. 86-7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴² Plotkin Boghardt, *Kuwait Amid War, Peace and Revolution*, p. 170.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-1.

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unease by many of the Western governments that had participated in its liberation, the US and others sought to pressure the Al-Sabah to institute reforms, so as to alleviate these domestic tensions.⁴⁴ As Tétreault notes:

Demands for reform came from outside... not only from exiles abroad during the Iraqi occupation, but also from countries that, having sent troops to liberate Kuwait, expected its leaders to behave better than the ousted invader. Despite clerical and even popular criticism, after liberation foreign ambassadors and NGOs pressed for women's rights, protection for stateless persons, better treatment of maids and other foreign workers, and structural changes to open Kuwait's economy and political system.⁴⁵

As a result Ghanim Alnajjar argues that: 'External pressures, whether from Western governments or non-governmental organizations... [were] instrumental in "pushing" the Kuwaiti government in the direction of democratic reforms.'⁴⁶ However he qualifies this, noting that: 'Although it has been argued that "the" external elements play "the" main role in shaping the directions of the Kuwaiti polity, internal dynamics play at least as important a role, and even more so in certain cases.'⁴⁷

These internal and external pressures culminated in the holding of parliamentary elections in October 1992. Tétreault argues that:

The election of a new National Assembly was held a little more than a year and a half after Kuwait was liberated from Iraqi occupation. A flood of reporters came from all over the world to observe the last days of the campaign, the balloting, and the counting of the votes. The sheer mass of foreign observers lent credence to a conviction constantly repeated by Kuwaitis throughout the campaign and election: "the whole world is watching us".⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Plotkin Boghardt, *Kuwait Amid War, Peace and Revolution*, p. 148.

⁴⁵ Tétreault, M., 'Kuwait's Annus Mirabilis', *Middle East Report*, 7/9/2006, at <http://208.113.246.249/mero/mero090706>, accessed 8/4/2012.

⁴⁶ Alnajjar, 'The Challenges Facing Kuwaiti Democracy', p. 252.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, p. 101.

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An election deemed free and fair by international observers, it led to substantial political gains for opposition groups, and also to the appointment of six elected parliamentarians to the Kuwaiti Cabinet, a significant achievement in itself.⁴⁹ The US Ambassador to Kuwait, Edward Gnehm, claimed that: ‘the process was extremely good at establishing at a grass-roots level the idea of democracy.’⁵⁰ But there was resistance from the Kuwaiti government. Ambassador Gnehm was ‘openly criticized by a prominent Kuwaiti politician for interfering “a lot” by “talking about democracy” and “encouraging” the political opposition.’⁵¹

The elections for the National Assembly nonetheless served to dissipate tensions between broad segments of Kuwaiti society and the Al-Sabah, helping to neutralise challenges to their rule and maintain stability. This can be seen in terms of the utility of institutional mechanisms – such as elections – in pacifying social tensions. Such mechanisms allow the ruling elite to exercise control more consensually, with less of a reliance on coercion. It can be seen in contrast to the Kuwaiti government’s actions in the immediate aftermath of the occupation, when coercive force was deployed under martial law, provoking domestic tensions and international condemnation. In some ways the G. H. W. Bush administration’s actions in Kuwait can therefore be seen as an early example of democracy promotion in the Middle East. But this was not about promoting a liberal democratic ideology in Kuwait in the pursuit of hegemony. In practice it was more a case of advocating limited political reforms, within the existing constitutional framework, with the explicit purpose of easing popular discontent with the ruling government. The G. H. W. Bush administration’s aim was not to foster the conditions for a transition to elite-based democracy in the near future, but rather ensure the ongoing stability of Kuwait under the Al-Sabah. The decision to proceed with limited political reforms, combined with the distribution of extensive financial benefits, ultimately allowed the Al-Sabah to maintain their rule. This stabilisation was clearly in the interests of the G. H. W. Bush administration, as it was becoming evident by this point that Hussein was not

⁴⁹ Yetiv, ‘Kuwait’s Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context’, p. 260.

⁵⁰ Gnehm, E., cited in Hedges, C., ‘Kuwaiti Opposition Members Win a Majority’, *New York Times*, 7/10/1992, at <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/07/world/kuwaiti-opposition-members-win-a-majority.html>, accessed 20/9/2012.

⁵¹ Yetiv, ‘Kuwait’s Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context’, p. 260.

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losing his grip on power, and therefore Iraq and by association Kuwait would continue to assume prominent roles in US regional policy.

The Clinton Administration: The Pursuit of Stability in Kuwait

President Clinton came to power in 1993, with the issue of Saddam Hussein still unresolved. This meant that Kuwait's future also remained uncertain. As discussed previously, the Clinton administration adopted the 'dual containment' of Iraq and Iran as the main feature of its security policy in the Middle East.⁵² A neighbour of both states, Kuwait assumed a central role in US considerations, particularly with reference to Iraq. In a speech at a US base in Kuwait, Clinton asserted that: 'The United States and the international community will not allow Baghdad to threaten its neighbors now or in the future. That is not our threat; that is our promise.'⁵³ The US-Kuwaiti relationship therefore continued to be based fundamentally on the fact that: 'The United States provides Kuwait with critical security guarantees against an Iraqi regime that continues to regard it as a province of Iraq, and a potentially bellicose Iran.'⁵⁴ In return Kuwait provided crucial support for the implementation of the policy of containment, funding and hosting US military forces for example.⁵⁵ The security dynamics that underpinned US-Kuwaiti relations were reflected in the fact that, in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion and the illustration of Kuwait's vulnerability that this involved, the Kuwaiti defence budget almost doubled from \$1.53 billion in 1990 to \$2.91 billion in 1995, with the US emerging as its main arms supplier in the process.⁵⁶

As a result of its existential dependency, Kuwait remained staunchly in favour of the US role in the Middle East under Clinton, at least in terms of the Persian Gulf. As Hajjar observes: 'Of all the Arabian Peninsula states, Kuwait is decidedly the most supportive of U.S. presence fundamentally because there has not been a regime

⁵² The policy of 'dual containment' is discussed in Chapter Five.

⁵³ Clinton, W. J., cited in Jehl, D., 'Clinton Visits U.S. Troops in Kuwait', *New York Times*, 29/10/1994, at <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/29/world/clinton-visits-us-troops-in-kuwait.html>, accessed 10/4/2012.

⁵⁴ Hajjar, 'U.S. Military Presence in the Gulf: Challenges and Prospects', p. 39.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁵⁶ Cordesman, A., Al-Rodhan, K., *Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Wars*, Praeger, 2006, p. 90. For a list of major US arms sales to Kuwait since 1991, see Katzman, 'Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy', p. 7.

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change in Iraq.⁵⁷ But this support was not unequivocal. As elsewhere, the Clinton administration's flagship policy of dual containment was criticised in Kuwait, although not necessarily at an official level. Abdullah Al-Shayegi argued that:

Popular and official sentiment in the Gulf viewing Iran and Iraq as equally serious threats to Gulf security, if it ever existed, is clearly fraying. The basic assumption of American strategy is being called into question, and with that have come new questions about the purpose and usefulness of the U.S. military presence in the region. These questions are not expressed at the official level, where the tie with the United States remains the centerpiece of Gulf strategy. However, both Islamist and nationalist intellectual circles in the Gulf are increasingly critical of the U.S. role, which they see as aimed not at protecting the Gulf states but at securing American economic and cultural hegemony in the region and pushing the Gulf states toward a strategic and economic alliance with Israel.⁵⁸

For instance Abdallah Al-Nafisi, a Sunni Islamist intellectual, argued at a Kuwait University conference in April 1997 that: 'On my way to this gathering I saw a number of Kuwaiti homes flying the American flag. Inside me there was an urge to get out of my car and burn these flags and the homes that are flying them. We should liberate ourselves from these intellectual deformities by stopping this reincarnation of Kuwait as an American personality.'⁵⁹ Such criticisms reveal a fundamental unease with the extent of Kuwait's dependency on the US, but also with the political, economic, social and cultural values that invariably accompanied the American presence. But the Clinton administration did not aggressively pursue democracy

⁵⁷ Hajjar, 'U.S. Military Presence in the Gulf: Challenges and Prospects', p. 37.

⁵⁸ Al-Shayegi, A., 'Dangerous Perceptions: Gulf Views of the U.S. Role in the Region', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (September) 1997, p. 4. Al-Shayegi elaborates: 'The debate in the United States over American policy in the Gulf has heated up recently [circa 1996]. Explicit calls for a reconsideration of dual containment, particularly regarding Iran have been heard from... prominent former U.S. officials... Academic criticism of the policy, always strong, has continued... But the way this debate is read in the Gulf will surprise Americans. Many Gulf observers see it as proof that the dual-containment policy has not succeeded in accomplishing its publicly stated goals of toppling the Iraqi regime and changing the behavior of Iran. They can see that with their own eyes. The fact that so many prominent Americans accept that the policy is a failure simply confirms their view. Yet they see that the policy does not change despite its failure. The conclusion they draw is that American objectives in the Gulf are not those that are publicly stated by the Clinton administration. Rather, they fear that there is a hidden agenda behind the continuation of such an obviously failed policy – the continuation of American control over the region to serve exclusively American interests.' See *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁵⁹ Al-Nafisi, A., cited in Al-Shayegi, 'Dangerous Perceptions', p. 5.

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promotion in Kuwait. Such antipathetic reactions appear to be based more on perceptions of the US's dominant presence in Kuwait, rather than any systematic American attempt to disseminate its ideology. Al-Shayehji highlights these tensions with a telling anecdote of a Kuwaiti symposium: 'The old [contentious] question of whether the Gulf should be called "Arab" or "Persian" was raised; when one participant volunteered that it should be called "American," there was almost unanimous support from the audience.'⁶⁰ Nonetheless, by most accounts even Kuwaiti Islamists did not fundamentally question the need for the US presence, as long as Hussein remained in power in Iraq.⁶¹

With reference to US democracy promotion in Kuwait, the primary emphasis under Clinton continued to be the National Assembly. The 1992 elections had resulted in a relatively assertive parliament, which sought to instigate reforms with various degrees of success. The Assembly's role was further consolidated with the holding of scheduled elections in 1996. Robert Pelletreau, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, underscored the importance of the parliamentary body:

In Kuwait, the National Assembly is a vibrant, growing part of government and society and is clearly enjoying greater authority than at any time in its history. I had the memorable experience of being the first foreign official to appear before a committee of the National Assembly when I met with the foreign affairs committee for a good and spirited exchange. This was followed quickly by a visit to the U.S. by a Kuwaiti parliamentary delegation which was very productive and which hopefully will contribute to the further development of that institution in Kuwait.⁶²

Periodic tensions between the National Assembly and the Kuwaiti government inevitably surfaced over the years, but in contrast to previous instances, the Al-Sabah could not afford to suspend parliament indefinitely. Tétreault observes that:

⁶⁰ Al-Shayehji, 'Dangerous Perceptions', p. 5.

⁶¹ Pollock, 'Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy', p. 23.

⁶² Pelletreau, R., 'Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Statement before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the House Foreign Affairs Committee', 14/6/1994, at <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/bureaus/nea/940614PelletreauEvents.html>, accessed 12/4/2012.

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Kuwait's governance problems coincided with multiple small-scale border violations by Iraqis and a couple of well-publicized incidents of Iraqi troop movements just north of the border. Such incidents probably helped the parliament in that they kept Kuwaiti rulers painfully aware of the need to avoid antagonizing the United States by any blatantly antidemocratic move.⁶³

This was indicative of the broader reality of Kuwait's post-liberation dependence on external actors. As Tétreault argues: 'For most of these external actors, constitutionality – clear rules and governments that abide by them – are bottom-line requirements.'⁶⁴ An awareness of this was evidenced in May 1999 when, in the face of rising tensions the Amir dissolved parliament, but crucially followed constitutional procedures that led to elections shortly afterwards.

Democracy promotion was not ultimately a major feature of the Clinton administration's policy to Kuwait. While incremental political reforms were encouraged, these were firmly within the boundaries of Kuwait's established tradition of consultative governance. For instance the NED provided the IRI with funds to run some limited programs 'to increase information available to National Assembly candidates on Kuwaiti citizens' attitudes and priorities and to improve constituent outreach capabilities for newly elected members of parliament.'⁶⁵ In essence the Clinton administration stood firmly against political regression, in the form of a suspended National Assembly for instance, rather than in support of in-depth political reform. This was for several reasons. Foremost, Kuwait's geostrategic location meant that the US emphasised the maintenance of the status quo. US regional policy was focused primarily on securing regime change in Iraq, followed by a modified Iranian behaviour abroad. It was dependent in no small measure on Kuwait's ongoing stability, which meant the broad continuity of the existing political system. This allowed it to host the US military forces implementing the policy of containment, and also meant that the export of oil from the Persian Gulf continued uninterrupted, a principal determinant of US policy in the Middle East. Another reason may well have been the results of the 1992 and 1996 elections, which saw

⁶³ Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, p. 172.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁶⁵ Brademas, J., 'The Accountability of the Executive to the Legislature', 8th International Anti-Corruption Conference, 7-11/9/1997, at <http://8iacc.org/papers/brademas.html>, accessed 4/6/2012.

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Islamists enhance their positions in the Kuwaiti parliament.⁶⁶ This is likely to have impacted on the Clinton administration's enthusiasm for reform, given that US policy-makers were increasingly concerned about the threat posed by Islamic radicalism, which at the time was racking Egypt in a violent insurgency that lasted from 1990 to 1997. Such radicalism was arguably conflated with Islamism as a whole. A final factor, and one that is often overlooked, was Kuwait's status as an affluent rentier economy, with a small population well provided for. This effectively shielded the Kuwaiti government from external attempts to promote economic and social reforms within its borders. It can be seen in contrast to Clinton's policy in Egypt for example, which due to domestic weaknesses was far more susceptible to US demands for free market and civil society reforms, viewed as prerequisites for eventual political reform.⁶⁷

Ultimately the Clinton administration's approach tied in with the wishes of the Al-Sabah, which sought to reform enough to contain social pressures and maintain stability, but still monopolise predominant power. Yetiv argues that external threats, most notably Iraq, made democratic practices more important to the Al-Sabah in two ways: 'First, they could serve as a safety valve to quell domestic pressures for democratization, which were intensified by the occupation... Second, enhanced democratic practices could decrease the chances that Iraq, with or without support from other transnational or ideological forces, could subvert Kuwait.'⁶⁸ This is supported by David Pollock, who claims that:

Parliamentary elections and other features of political life approaching a democratic constitutional monarchy... play important roles in Kuwait today. This dimension of Kuwaiti public life, coupled with the country's prosperous economy, supplies the safety valves to alleviate what might otherwise be troubling security, social, sectarian, or foreign policy – related tensions below the calm surface of Kuwait.⁶⁹

As discussed above, institutional practices in the form of elections, can serve as a non-coercive mechanism of social control, dissipating social pressures from below.

⁶⁶ Brown, 'Pushing Toward Party Politics? Kuwait's Islamic Constitutional Movement', pp. 7-8.

⁶⁷ The Clinton administration's policy in Egypt is addressed in Chapter Four.

⁶⁸ Yetiv, 'Kuwait's Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context', pp. 264-5.

⁶⁹ Pollock, 'Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy', p. 5.

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This helps maintain stability, the overriding objective of US policy in Kuwait. But unlike the Clinton administration's graduated attempts to introduce political, economic, social and cultural reforms elsewhere in the Middle East, say Egypt, in the hope of achieving hegemony, little if any progress was made towards this goal in Kuwait. This was a case in which the US's interest in ongoing stability clearly prevailed over any desire to encourage the reforms necessary for a transition to elite-based democracy, and a more enduring form of stability. The irony is that Kuwait, following the Persian Gulf War, was perhaps the most promising regional candidate for democracy promotion. One of the most receptive to such a process on a societal level, given existing popular demands for reform, it was also uniquely pro-American.

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The G. W. Bush Administration: Pursuing Stability Amidst Regional Turmoil

Under the G. W. Bush administration, the US-Kuwaiti relationship was defined by two pivotal events. The first was the attacks of September 11, 2001, which led to an increasingly assertive US presence in the region.⁷⁰ The second was the invasion of Iraq in 2003. It was the latter that primarily determined the contours of the G. W. Bush administration's relationship with Kuwait over the course of the next five years. This was in much the same way that the issue of Iraq, and to a lesser extent Iran, had determined US relations with Kuwait under previous Administrations. Kuwait therefore assumed a crucial role in facilitating US policy towards Iraq under G. W. Bush. This was a direct result of the Iraqi occupation and Hussein's continued belligerence after liberation, which had led the Kuwaiti government to: '[espouse] in word and deed, a close and very concrete alliance with the United States, embracing extensive military, commercial, and even cultural cooperation.'⁷¹ Kuwait served as the main platform for 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' in 2003, reserving over half its land mass for use by coalition forces, declaring these areas a closed military zone.⁷² This support came at a time of significant regional tensions, with major US allies such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt reluctant to assist efforts against Iraq.⁷³ As the State Department put it: 'Kuwait provides indispensable support in terms of access to its facilities, resources, and land to support military operations in Iraq.'⁷⁴ This led the G. W. Bush administration to designate Kuwait a 'major non-NATO ally' in 2004, the

⁷⁰ Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the 'principal architect of the 9/11 attacks' according to the 9/11 Commission Report, was of Kuwaiti origin. See National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2004, p. 145.

⁷¹ Pollock, 'Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy', p. 6.

⁷² Kuwait furthermore: 'allowed U.S. use of two air bases, its international airport and sea ports, and provided \$266 million in burden sharing support to the combat, including base support, personnel support, and supplies such as food and fuel.' See Katzman, 'Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy', p. 7.

⁷³ Saudi Arabia, over whom the first Persian Gulf War was partly waged, questioned the necessity of the war and refused to host coalition forces, despite its larger size and strategic depth. See Katzman, K., 'Kuwait: Post-Saddam Issues and U.S. Policy', *CRS Report for Congress*, 29/6/2005, p. 2. The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud Al-Faysal, stated: 'with no proof that there is a threat imminent from Iraq, I don't think Saudi Arabia will join in.' See 'Interview with Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud Al-Faysal', *Iraq Watch*, 11/8/2002, at <http://www.iraqwatch.org/government/Saudi/saudi-mfa-081102.htm>, accessed 21/4/2012. Turkey and Egypt both opposed the invasion of Iraq, in no small measure because of domestic public pressures, with Hosni Mubarak warning that the invasion would lead to 'one hundred new [Osama] bin Ladens.' See 'Mubarak Warns of "100 bin Ladens"', *CNN*, 1/4/2003, at <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/31/iraq.egypt.mubarak.reut/>, accessed 21/4/2012.

⁷⁴ 'Kuwait: Security Assistance', US Department of State, 2/7/2007, p. 1, cited in Pollock, 'Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy', p. 2.

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only Gulf state apart from Bahrain to share this designation.⁷⁵ Iran also continued to be an important influence on US regional policy and, by virtue of its proximity, on US-Kuwaiti relations – albeit to a lesser degree than Iraq. The primary manifestation of this under the G. W. Bush administration was the Gulf Security Dialogue, initiated in May 2006. Intended as the ‘the principal security coordination mechanism between the United States and the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council’, its underlying purpose was to counter Iran.⁷⁶ It was evidenced primarily in US arms sales to Kuwait, which continued to be a major facet of the post-1991 relationship, with the first major sale under the Gulf Security Dialogue ‘valued at about \$1.3 billion.’⁷⁷ Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice argued that this would ‘help bolster the forces of moderation and support a broader strategy to counter the negative influences of al-Qa’ida, Hezbollah, Syria and Iran.’⁷⁸ However it is important to note that Kuwait was not as hostile to Iran as some of the other GCC states, such as Saudi Arabia or Bahrain, or other Arab US allies outside the Gulf, such as Egypt. For instance, it often hosted various pro-Iranian Iraqi Shiite groups opposed to Hussein, despite them having conducted attacks within Kuwait during the 1980s.⁷⁹

Beyond the security or military relationship, the G. W. Bush administration engaged Kuwait on a number of fronts. One of these was economic reform, seen as a key component of political reform by successive American administrations. The primary manifestation of this engagement under G. W. Bush was a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement in 2004. Amongst others it called for increased foreign direct investment, private investment, and private sector contacts between the US and Kuwait.⁸⁰ A Trade and Investment Framework Agreement is often seen as a prelude to a Free Trade Agreement, something Kuwait publicly stated it would pursue, and

⁷⁵ Katzman, ‘Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy’, p. 7.

⁷⁶ Blanchard, C., Grimmett, R., ‘The Gulf Security Dialogue and Related Arms Sale Proposals’, *CRS Report for Congress*, 8/10/2008.

⁷⁷ Katzman, ‘Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy’, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Rice, C., cited in ‘Rice on Mid-East Military Run’, *The Australian*, 1/8/2007, at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/rice-on-mid-east-military-run/story-e6frg6tf-1111114079518>, accessed 21/4/2012.

⁷⁹ Katzman, ‘Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy’, p. 9.

⁸⁰ ‘Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the State of Kuwait Concerning the Development of Trade and Investment Relations’, 6/2/2004, at http://www.ustr.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/agreements/tifa/asset_upload_file909_7733.pdf, accessed 10/5/2012.

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which would require significant structural reforms of its economy.⁸¹ David McCormick, Under Secretary for International Affairs at the US Treasury Department, argued that: ‘there needs to be in Kuwait and around the world a real commitment to openness in terms of trade, a reducing of barriers to investment, and openness to people from outside your own borders in terms of playing a constructive role in a talented workforce.’⁸² These comments allude to the fact that, as stated previously, the rentier nature of Kuwait’s economy has shielded it from the need to commit to reforms. The insular structure of Kuwait’s economy is relevant to the US strategy of democracy promotion in two ways. Internationally, Kuwait’s oil revenues have limited the need for the openness required by most states to operate competitively in the global economic system, which is characterised by an emphasis on free trade and markets. Time and again, US officials have expressed their belief that free market values and liberal democratic norms are intertwined, with free markets serving as the foundation of democratic governance. But Kuwait’s economic independence has limited the ability of the US to promote economic and social reforms within it, as a precursor to political reform. Domestically, as Salem notes: ‘the monolithic aspect of the economy and employment in Kuwait is one of the strongest forces that promotes apathy in the society and protects the status quo. There is little in Kuwait that cannot be resolved by cooptation or throwing money at the problem or the person.’⁸³ This point is underscored by James Sadowski, who observes that: ‘Kuwait actually collects less in taxes than any other government in the world.’⁸⁴ Of relevance here is one of the popular slogans of the American revolution of 1775, coincidentally the same period since when the Al-Sabah have ruled Kuwait: ‘no taxation without representation’. The implication is that if citizens pay financial taxes to the state, they are entitled to some form of political

⁸¹ Katzman, ‘Kuwait: Security, Reform, and U.S. Policy’, pp. 10-11. An interesting potential impact on Kuwait’s foreign policy is raised by Anthony Cordesman and Khalid Al-Rodhan: ‘Kuwait is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with America, and one of America’s conditions for agreeing to the FTA is for Kuwait to dismantle the economic boycott against Israel and permit trading with Israeli companies (currently banned); Bahrain, for example, accepted this provision when it signed its FTA with America, and it is possible that Kuwait would have to do the same.’ See Cordesman, Al-Rodhan, *Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Wars*, pp. 116-7.

⁸² Al-Awadhi, E., ‘Kuwait, US “Very Strong” Economic Partners US Official’, *Kuwait News Agency*, 28/10/2007, at <http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticlePrintPage.aspx?id=1852520&language=en>, accessed 12/5/2012.

⁸³ Salem, ‘Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate’, p. 10.

⁸⁴ Taxation provides only around eight per cent of annual government revenue in Kuwait. See Sadowski, J., ‘Prospects for Democracy in the Middle East: The Case of Kuwait’, *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (Winter/Spring) 1997, p. 62.

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representation. But with the vast majority of Kuwaiti citizens employed by the state and exempted from taxation, their economic dependence on the state and in turn the state's economic independence from them, reduces internal dynamics for reform and protects the maintenance of the status quo.

This has been compounded by the gradual decline of the traditional business community, one of the most important domestic reform constituencies. As Brown argues:

The traditional business elite, the backbone of the constitutional order in a previous generation, has watched as the parliament has paralyzed decision making and become the preserve of tribal and neighborhood deputies more interested in securing benefits for their constituents than in transforming Kuwait into an international economic powerhouse. And the traditional business elite's economic position in Kuwait has also declined in relative terms, as new economic actors have entered the scene.⁸⁵

Here the role of the Kuwaiti parliament as an impediment to economic reform is highlighted. This occurred most notably with reference to Project Kuwait, a government initiative to develop the northern oil fields on the border with Iraq through foreign investment.⁸⁶ Salem claims that:

The government argues that rapid development of the fields requires a level of investment and technological know-how beyond the capacity of Kuwait's publicly owned oil company; it also points out that Western investment on the precarious border with Iraq will guarantee Western interest in protecting Kuwait. A majority of parliamentarians insist that Kuwait can and must develop the fields alone. As a result, the oil remains unexploited.⁸⁷

Monica Malik argues that in general parliament remains 'deeply suspicious of measures which could lead to Kuwaitis losing their jobs or see increasing foreign involvement in the economy (such as privatisation, tax reform and Project

⁸⁵ Brown, 'Kuwaiti Democracy in Crisis'.

⁸⁶ Salem, 'Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate', p. 15.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

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Kuwait).⁸⁸ As a result of this, the Al-Sabah have long viewed parliament as the primary obstacle to the economic growth witnessed in the more authoritarian Gulf states of Qatar and Dubai.⁸⁹ As Salem argues:

Kuwait, once the leader in the region, has now fallen behind countries it used to regard as backward. The ruling family see Parliament as a drag on quick decision making and growth-friendly policies, a body that blocks government initiatives and craves patronage. While the opposition argues that more democratization is necessary for more rapid and sustainable growth, many within the emir's circle argue quite the opposite.⁹⁰

The National Assembly also assumed a somewhat ambiguous role towards political reform, another important area of engagement under the G. W. Bush administration. This despite being the main feature of the more consensual, participatory model of Kuwaiti governance that emerged following liberation in 1991, and an obvious reference point for US democracy promotion efforts. During the years of the G. W. Bush administration, there were a number of positive developments with reference to political reform in Kuwait. These included the enfranchisement of women, the effective lifting of the ban on public gatherings, electoral district reforms, and the relaxation of press laws.⁹¹ All of these served to highlight the relative strength of Kuwait's 'democratic' credentials, particularly in comparison to the rest of the region. This clearly had added importance in the context of G. W. Bush's prominent emphasis on political reform in the Middle East. But with regards to the most significant of these reforms, the enfranchisement of Kuwaiti women in 2005, which the US had been advocating for strongly since the Clinton administration, the Kuwaiti parliament had in fact opposed it.⁹² Pollock notes: 'The dramatic policy

⁸⁸ Malik, M., 'Kuwait: Political, Not Economic, Reform', *SCB Economic Update*, 22/4/2007, at <http://www.ameinfo.com/90657.html>, accessed 22/4/2012.

⁸⁹ Salem, 'Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate', p. 16.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁹² Yetiv, 'Kuwait's Democratic Experiment in its Broader International Context', p. 260. Female candidates were allowed to participate for the first time in the 2006 parliamentary elections, albeit unsuccessfully, due to a combination of political inexperience and voter intransigence. See Salem, 'Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate', p. 7. Nonetheless, this can be seen in contrast to the previous parliamentary elections of 2003, which were generally regarded as a success given that approximately eighty percent of eligible voters participated; thus only around 135,000 of 890,000 citizens, in a country with a population of around three million. See Kéchichian, J., 'Democratization

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departure, supported by both the royal family and an assortment of very vocal Kuwaiti nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) since 1999, had actually been blocked by conservatives in parliament all through the preceding decade.⁹³ This highlights the contradictory role of parliament in Kuwait which, as the principal democratic institution, actively opposed efforts to extend the electoral franchise.⁹⁴ The above were accompanied by a number of negative political developments, most notably the increasingly frequent dissolutions of the National Assembly. For the first time since 1999, itself the first dissolution since liberation, the Amir dissolved parliament in 2003, 2006 and 2008. This followed attempts by parliament to challenge the government on a range of issues such as electoral reform and corruption. Explaining his actions in 2008, the Amir stated: 'For the sake of protecting the country and the people from irresponsible behaviour that has exceeded the limit... and in order to safeguard national unity, I have decided to dissolve parliament and call on the Kuwaiti people to elect a new parliament.'⁹⁵ In each of these cases the constitutional process was followed, and elections were held shortly afterwards. Nonetheless, it highlighted the precarious position of parliament vis-à-vis the government within the Kuwaiti political system. The timing of these suspensions, which resurfaced with increasing frequency during the G. W. Bush administration, raises important questions. The obvious explanation is that the US was preoccupied with events in neighbouring Iraq, which was descending into a sectarian civil war. Political developments in Kuwait thus paled in significance, with the Administration reluctant to involve itself in Kuwaiti domestic affairs, barring say an unconstitutional suspension of parliament. In no small measure this was a reflection of the integral role assumed by Kuwait in facilitating US policy in Iraq.

in Gulf Monarchies: A New Challenge to the GCC', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XI, No. 4, (Winter) 2004, pp. 52-3. Given that women constituted over fifty per cent of Kuwaiti citizens, this particular reform clearly had a significant societal impact.

⁹³ Pollock, 'Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy', p. 19.

⁹⁴ As Brown observes, this reform was only possible because 'ministers give the government 17 votes from outside parliament's elected membership. With only 50 elected members, the government needs only to pick up a small number of votes to obtain a parliamentary majority on many matters... [So] when parliament voted in 2005 to extend the vote to women, the majority of elected deputies actually voted against the move, but they were defeated by a large showing of ministers supporting the change.' See Brown, 'Pushing Toward Party Politics? Kuwait's Islamic Constitutional Movement', p. 8.

⁹⁵ Al-Sabah, J., cited in 'Kuwait Dissolves Parliament, Sets May 17 Election Date', *AFP*, 19/3/2008, at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5igKC7in0Kqf2xAbW3TFF8a3ahhdA>, accessed 25/4/2012.

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What ultimately characterised these developments, both positive and negative, was the relatively low profile the US assumed in them. Pollock elaborates with regard to the enfranchisement of women:

Many observers believe that international and especially U.S. interest in Kuwaiti democracy, in the decade and a half since liberation from Iraq in 1991, influenced the ruling family and some of its entourage in this direction. But the impetus for and the activities of Kuwaiti suffragists and other women's rights activists in recent years were almost entirely homegrown. In fact, some U.S. officials dealing with this issue made a deliberate decision that a higher American profile on it, at least in Kuwait, might well actually backfire, by playing into the hands of traditionalist charges about alien or "anti-Islamic" influences. But each time Kuwait's own reformists succeed in pressing forward with their own agenda, U.S. officials enthusiastically applaud that progress. They also incline to respond favorably to the occasional local requests for partnership in building upon such progress, mostly through small-scale NGO networking and visitor-exchange projects. This lowkey formula, arrived at by lucky accident as much as anything, has so far succeeded in Kuwait.⁹⁶

A 'lowkey' approach was true of the G. W. Bush administration's overall democracy promotion strategy in Kuwait. But rather than merely a subtle tactic, it reflects the focus of US democracy promotion on civil society, where hegemony is cultivated. And Kuwait differs notably from the rest of the region in this respect, given the relatively advanced state of its civil society. While the Kuwaiti government has kept a 'tight rein' on civil society, as demonstrated by the ban on political parties: 'The absence of a strong ruling regime has prevented the state from crushing or absorbing civil society – a rare situation in Arab countries.'⁹⁷ This is alluded to by Hamad Salem Al-Marri: 'Thank God that in Kuwait we can criticize the government, the ministers and even the prime minister in the press, on television, and in public seminars, then go to bed without any fears of the "night visitors".'⁹⁸ Nonetheless it

⁹⁶ Pollock, 'Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy', p. 20.

⁹⁷ Salem, 'Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate', p. 10.

⁹⁸ Al-Marri, H., 'Al-Irhab Al-Hukumi', *Al-Watan*, 9/8/2007, cited in Pollock, 'Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy', p. 11.

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would be naïve to suggest that civil society operates independently of the government in Kuwait. As Salem elaborates:

Much of the NGO sector has strong links with the state, as many are dependent on government cooperation or funds, or are dominated by elites who for other reasons have strong links to the state-centric elite, or both. Only a small portion of the NGO sector has been a source of sociopolitical dynamism, hosting debates and participating in public movements. The majority of other NGOs have remained focused on narrower sectoral or service functions, preserving a nonantagonistic relationship with the state and other elites.⁹⁹

By engaging civil society through various economic, social and cultural policies, the US has sought to gradually strengthen the reform movement and influence Kuwait at a societal level. This is consistent with an incremental, long-term approach towards political reform, and ultimately the pursuit of hegemony.

The G. W. Bush administration's approach to reform in Kuwait was outlined by then Ambassador to Kuwait, Deborah Jones, in a confidential diplomatic cable:

There are several realities here. First and foremost is that the U.S. and our entrenched security presence enables – in the psychological sense – a relatively frivolous approach to politics. As long as the oil flows out and the dollars flow in, Kuwaitis can afford to engage in these parlor games and the Amir can dither over tough decisions with impunity. After all, what do most Kuwaitis lack for? Nothing.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Salem, 'Kuwait: Politics in a Participatory Emirate', pp. 10-11. This is supported by Haya Al-Mughni, who argues that: 'Kuwait's voluntary associations cannot operate outside the state's institutional framework. In this context, strict administrative and legislative provisions regulate voluntary groups' activities, limiting their ability to pursue their own interests and influence social change in ways likely to conflict with the interests of the state. The state also retains the decision-making power over who ultimately controls an association.' See Al-Mughni, H., 'From Gender Equality to Female Subjugation: The Changing Agendas of Women's Groups in Kuwait', in Chatty, D., Rabo, A., (eds.), *Organizing Women: Formal and Informal Women's Groups in the Middle East*, Berg, 1997, p. 195.

¹⁰⁰ Jones, D., 'Kuwait's Democratic Jalopy - Still Chugging Despite Bumps in the Road', US Embassy in Kuwait, 4/12/2008, at <http://wikileaks.ch/cable/2008/12/08KUWAIT1187.html>, accessed 4/4/2012.

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She claimed further that: ‘Many believe the USG [US Government] is calling the shots in any event. The Russian Ambassador here asserted the other evening that “75 percent of Kuwaitis want dissolution, but they are afraid that you (i.e. the U.S. government) won’t allow it”.’¹⁰¹ These statements evidence the argument that the dynamics for reform in Kuwait are limited – on the one hand internally, by Kuwait’s economic independence and the substantial welfare enjoyed by its citizens, and on the other externally, by the fact that the US already commands a dominant presence in Kuwait. Both of these diminish the relative urgency of democracy promotion as a US strategy in Kuwait. Jones then articulated one of the central dilemmas of US policy in the Middle East, which has long been divided between maintaining longstanding relationships with authoritarian allies, and promoting reform. She claimed that: ‘Certainly many of our specific interests would be better served with a more efficient, directive government [in Kuwait], akin to the UAE or Saudi models, at least in theory and for awhile. But that would undermine our political assertion that only democracy, in the long term, mitigates the potential for extremism.’¹⁰² This statement is especially interesting in light of the G. W. Bush administration’s forthright emphasis on political reform in the Middle East, and particularly so in adjacent Iraq. It serves as a rare example of a contemporary official at the highest levels of US government, expressly raising the possibility that US interests may be better served by a more ‘efficient, directive’ – in other words authoritarian – government. But rather than a refutation of democracy promotion, this merely

¹⁰¹ Jones noted that: ‘The Ambassador has been urged by some parties - including at least one member of the ruling Al Sabah family - to intervene to prevent dissolution, and just as strongly by others - including the Amir’s half-brother and confidant Shaykh Misha’al - to keep firmly out of the country’s governmental knickers. *What has been communicated clearly to senior leadership by the Ambassador, discreetly, is a request that they not blindside us, as their most important ally; we will have a reaction to any unconstitutional dissolution and it would be best that we have a full context in which to craft any response*’ (emphasis added). Jones then outlined a series of official ‘talking points’ for use with the media, in the event of an unconstitutional dissolution of parliament. They included the following:

- ‘We have seen reports that the Amir of Kuwait has dissolved Kuwait’s National Assembly for an undetermined period of time.’
- ‘Kuwait is an important ally of the United States with a long and unique tradition of democratic governance. We hope this will be a temporary measure.’
- ‘We are aware that strained relations between the Government of Kuwait and the National Assembly and the resulting political paralysis have been a source of frustration for many Kuwaitis, some of whom have called for the Parliament’s dissolution.’
- ‘We strongly support Kuwait’s democratic traditions and note that Parliament is only one part of that equation; democracy is also about respect for rule of law and institutions. Honest differences between the executive and legislative branches should not lead to governmental paralysis.’
- ‘We would also hope that Kuwait’s well-entrenched freedom of speech, as represented by its lively press and diwaniya tradition, will be respected during this period.’ See Jones, ‘Kuwait’s Democratic Jalopy - Still Chugging Despite Bumps in the Road’.

¹⁰² Ibid.

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supports the argument that it is only where conditions for political reform have been deemed viable, that the US has promoted transitions to elite-based democracy. As stated previously, this is usually determined by the presence of candidates amenable to the US and its interests, able to secure power electorally.

Democracy promotion was a feature of US policy to Kuwait under the G. W. Bush administration nonetheless. The US's approach was outlined in a confidential embassy document entitled 'Kuwait Democratic Reform Strategy.'¹⁰³ It claimed that:

The U.S. strategy for democratic reform in Kuwait must address the need for major political and economic change without providing fodder for opponents of change who will point to reform as a U.S. imposition. The U.S. strategy must also recognize the need to proceed with caution in a society with a significant degree of homegrown democracy and which has achieved a careful balance between potentially fractious elements of society. Greater success will come from supporting Kuwaiti initiatives and using global models rather than U.S.-specific examples.¹⁰⁴

The strategy document focused on three main areas of reform, all located within civil society: first 'enhancing the effectiveness of political associations', second 'supporting women's integration into the political system', and third 'encouraging responsible youth activism.'¹⁰⁵ With reference to political associations, the strategy argued for a skills-based approach, specifically targeting 'underdeveloped liberal political associations.'¹⁰⁶ This was for three reasons:

First, skills-based training is gender inclusive and can be extended to all local political associations and civil society organizations. Second, the training will largely benefit less-organized liberal and moderate groups and help balance the influence of Islamists in future parliamentary elections. Finally, this approach will be less immediately threatening to the Al Sabah leadership than pushing for the legalization of political

¹⁰³ Misenheimer, A., 'Updated Kuwait Democratic Reform Strategy', US Embassy in Kuwait, 11/10/2007, at <http://wikileaks.ch/cable/2007/10/07KUWAIT1509.html>, accessed 4/4/2012.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

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parties or other intrusive political reforms. This reduces the likelihood of a near-term destabilizing political crisis that would work against democratization.¹⁰⁷

This again reflects the US's emphasis on gradual, incremental reform, concentrated mainly within civil society, with the maintenance of Kuwait's stability foremost. It also evinces a clear reluctance to aggressively challenge the Kuwaiti government on reform, for example by making the ban on political parties a focal point of US strategy. Finally, it unequivocally demonstrates the ideological orientation of the organisations the US aimed to support, namely liberal political associations most likely to be positively aligned with US interests. This is underscored in the document's conclusion that: 'U.S. assistance could help non-Islamist, non-tribally-based Kuwaiti political associations better articulate their platforms and more effectively reach their target audiences.'¹⁰⁸

In terms of integrating women into the political system, US strategy was outlined as follows:

First, we should help Kuwaiti women learn lessons from the recent elections. Surveys will help identify ways women's rights activists can more effectively encourage Kuwaiti women to participate in the political process. Second, we should help women learn how to overcome traditional social barriers to advocate their political views effectively at the local, national, and regional levels. This could be done in part by drawing on the experience of female politicians and women's rights activists from other Arab countries. Third, we should actively target local women's groups for inclusion in the skills-based training programs suggested above. It is important for women to be better incorporated into existing political organizations rather than becoming marginalized in female-only activist groups outside the political mainstream.¹⁰⁹

The strategy noted that 'increased women's participation in the political process will be a force for reform,' and moreover that this 'will be especially true if women are

¹⁰⁷ Misenheimer, 'Updated Kuwait Democratic Reform Strategy'.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

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well-informed about their interests and how to use the political system to achieve these interests.’¹¹⁰ The latter implies that part of US reform strategy consisted of informing Kuwaiti women of what their interests in fact constituted.

Finally, in term of encouraging youth activism, US strategy emphasised that: ‘Young, politically active men and women are a potential source of reform in Kuwait. These youth activists, many of whom got started in politics through the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS), played an influential role in the pro-reform, anti-corruption rallies and subsequent elections in 2006.’¹¹¹ Given that approximately a quarter of Kuwait’s population is under of the age of fifteen, the implications of this demographic trend are clear.¹¹² The strategy document claimed that:

The USG should help local student organizations, especially the student parties at Kuwait University, to develop their political awareness and advocacy skills, and to identify future leaders for International Visitor Programs. It is also important to engage with NUKS-U.S., the organization’s largest and most active overseas branch. Many of Kuwait’s liberal political leaders have emerged from NUKS-U.S.¹¹³

The benefits of exchange programs between the US and Kuwait were also noted: ‘We are also developing a cadre of young Kuwaitis who understand open political systems through our many exchange programs, including Youth Exchange and Study (YES) and Fulbright. These exchanges are proven, powerful tools of influence and we continue to encourage major expansion of these programs.’¹¹⁴ The strategy concluded that: ‘More politically astute students will keep up pressure for reform. Empowering students to mobilize themselves will erase the advantages currently enjoyed by Islamist groups on Kuwaiti campuses and among Kuwaiti students abroad.’¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Misenheimer, ‘Updated Kuwait Democratic Reform Strategy’.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² ‘Kuwait’, *The World Factbook*, US Central Intelligence Agency, 16/4/2012, at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ku.html>, accessed 2/5/2012.

¹¹³ Misenheimer, ‘Updated Kuwait Democratic Reform Strategy’.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

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The US strategy of democracy promotion in Kuwait was implemented by a range of actors, including governmental, non-governmental and local organisations. One of the most prominent official mechanisms in Kuwait, as with the broader region, was the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). In Kuwait MEPI sponsored an array of programs designed to ‘empower women and engage youth, encourage democratic processes, and support growth and transition in Kuwait’s economic sector.’¹¹⁶ As typical of US democracy promotion efforts elsewhere, MEPI’s work in Kuwait was broadly focused on strengthening civil society and encouraging economic reform, the latter through projects related to the US-Kuwait Trade and Investment Framework Agreement of 2004.¹¹⁷ MEPI also addressed another key tenet of US democracy promotion, the role of elections as the primary source of legitimation. For example MEPI sponsored a group of twenty-five individuals from the Gulf, including election practitioners, members of civil society, the media and regional parliaments, to participate in election management training in Washington, D.C. in 2008.¹¹⁸ These MEPI-funded programs were implemented by a range of non-governmental actors discussed below. But many of MEPI’s activities in Kuwait were also conducted in cooperation with the US Embassy. As Katzman notes: ‘the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait uses various programming tools, including dialogue and public diplomacy and funds from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), to encourage democracy.’¹¹⁹ This reflects the multifaceted implementation of US democracy promotion strategy in Kuwait and the broader region, which combines the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organisations, domestic and regional initiatives, embassies, intelligence services, and private companies amongst others.

With reference to non-governmental actors, one of the most active in Kuwait was the NDI. The example of women’s enfranchisement provides an illustration of the scope of its work. With many of its projects funded by the NED, from 2004 onwards the

¹¹⁶ ‘MEPI in Kuwait: Promoting Equal Opportunities for Participation and Prosperity’, US-Middle East Partnership Initiative, 15/4/2010, at <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/uae/133619/hamdits/04-15-2010%20Kuwait%20Country%20Profile%20FINAL.pdf>, accessed 2/5/2012.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. For an overview of MEPI’s work in Kuwait, see the Deputy Chief of Mission in Kuwait Matthew Tueller’s quarterly report of key MEPI developments in the country in 2006. See Tueller, M., ‘Kuwait MEPIC 5: MEPI Meets Change, Challenges and Success in Kuwait (MEPI Quarterly Report)’, US Embassy in Kuwait, 13/7/2006, at <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/07/06KUWAIT2824.html#>, accessed 25/9/2012.

¹¹⁸ Islam, M. N., Azam, M., ‘Democratization in the Gulf Monarchies and American Civil Society’, *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 9, No. 3, (Fall) 2010, p. 17.

¹¹⁹ Katzman, ‘Kuwait: Post-Saddam Issues and U.S. Policy’, p. 6.

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NDI sought to ‘assist advocates for women’s political rights with developing an effective strategy to gain universal suffrage.’¹²⁰ After 2005 and the enfranchisement of Kuwaiti women, the NDI initiated a training program for female candidates and their campaigns.¹²¹ One aspect of this was the ‘Partners in Participation Regional Campaign School’, run in conjunction with the IRI and funded by MEPI.¹²² With a significant number of participants from Kuwait, it was designed to teach women ‘how to run successful political campaigns and help build a regional network of women with the skills for long-term political success.’¹²³ Following the dissolution of the National Assembly and the announcement of unscheduled parliamentary elections in 2006, the NDI ran a one-month in-depth training program for female candidates. This incorporated one-on-one meetings with campaign and media experts, as well as elected women from across the Middle East. The meetings addressed a range of issues including ‘campaign messages, candidate image, fundraising, voter outreach, speech development and overall media strategy.’¹²⁴ This was accompanied by a ‘comprehensive voter education program to raise women’s awareness of their voting rights’ and encourage them to vote.¹²⁵ Matthew Tueller, Deputy Chief of Mission in Kuwait, stated in a US Embassy cable that:

NDI continued its support for women’s political participation in Kuwait by conducting extensive election training as prelude to the June 29 election. Exhibiting vast flexibility in the compressed period available, NDI brought in campaign experts from the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East to work with women candidates... Embassy personnel visiting election tents during the campaign period reported seeing more than 1,500 women in possession of well-designed,

¹²⁰ ‘Kuwait’, National Democratic Institute, at <http://www.ndi.org/Kuwait>, accessed 2/5/2012.

¹²¹ ‘Kuwait’, National Democratic Institute.

¹²² In contrast to Egypt or Iraq, the IRI was not particularly active in Kuwait. One of the few examples was an IRI project funded by a \$265,000 grant from the NED to ‘advance public policy debate and issue advocacy within Kuwaiti society,’ conducted in association with the Kuwait Economic Society (KES). See National Endowment for Democracy, ‘Annual Report - 2007’, at <http://www.ned.org/publications/annual-reports/2007-annual-report/middle-east-and-northern-africa/description-of-2007--7>, accessed 2/5/2012.

¹²³ ‘Kuwait’, National Democratic Institute. For a report on the Partners in Participation Regional Campaign School, see ‘Regional Campaign School – Report on Activities, Kuwait City, Kuwait, September 25-28, 2005’, at http://www.ndi.org/files/2367_ku_school_report_engpdf_09122008.pdf, accessed 2/5/2012. See also LeBaron, R., ‘MEPI-Funded Regional Campaign School Brings Arab Women Together to Strengthen Their Political Skills’, US Embassy in Kuwait, 5/10/2005, at <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2005/10/05KUWAIT4325.html#>, accessed 25/9/2012.

¹²⁴ ‘Kuwait’, National Democratic Institute.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

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attractive, and informative handouts partially funded by NDI with MEPI funds.¹²⁶

In the aftermath of the 2006 elections and the failure of any female candidates to gain parliamentary seats, the NDI convened ‘a series of focus groups to gain a better understanding of what factors influenced voters’ political choices during the parliamentary elections and to provide new insight into the perceived role of women as political leaders in Kuwaiti democracy.’¹²⁷ The findings were used to inform the NDI’s preparations for future elections.¹²⁸ The above demonstrate the important role the NDI assumed in identifying, preparing and supporting candidates for Kuwait’s parliamentary elections, and moreover in facilitating oversight for these very same elections.¹²⁹ The issue here is not the NDI’s support for universal suffrage, but rather the role of an American NGO, representing one of the two main political parties in the US, funded by and working with the US government, in supporting individual candidates in elections for the parliament of a sovereign country.

The above demonstrate a clear convergence between US government policy, as articulated in the ‘Kuwait Democratic Reform Strategy’, and the work of non-governmental organisations such as the NDI or IRI, and their local partners in Kuwait such as the KTS or KES. Issues prioritised in the confidential US strategy document, such as women’s integration and youth participation, formed the focus of the NDI’s and others work. In effect these non-governmental organisations implemented official US policy aims on the ground. This is stated explicitly in a confidential US diplomatic cable: ‘Embassy Kuwait approves of the overall direction of the workplan set out by NDI for spending the rest of its funding. The emphasis on building the political capacity of women, political associations, and youth works toward the USG’s Freedom Agenda goals for Kuwait.’¹³⁰ As with other cases of US democracy promotion in the Middle East and beyond, it is important to underscore the partisan nature of the civil society actors supported. This was reflected in the

¹²⁶ Tueller, ‘Kuwait MEPIC 5: MEPI Meets Change, Challenges and Success in Kuwait (MEPI Quarterly Report).

¹²⁷ ‘Kuwait’, National Democratic Institute.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Alongside the Kuwait Transparency Society (KTS), its main local partner, the NDI conducted training programmes for electoral monitors before the 2006 elections. See Islam, Azam, ‘Democratization in the Gulf Monarchies and American Civil Society’, pp. 16-17.

¹³⁰ See Tueller, M., ‘Upcoming NDI Programming in Kuwait’, US Embassy in Kuwait, 12/2/2007, at <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/02/07KUWAIT193.html#>, accessed 25/9/2012.

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US's repeated refusal to countenance 'Islamist' or conservative 'tribally-based' actors, whether in parliament or civil society more generally, instead emphasising the role of 'liberal' and 'moderate' elements, a minority constituency in Kuwait, but one more likely to be positively inclined towards its interests.¹³¹

Nonetheless, the issues prioritized by the G. W. Bush administration in Kuwait reflect the strategy of democracy promotion's relatively understated profile there. While significant, these issues were nonetheless largely supported or at least tolerated by the ruling family, as for example women's suffrage. The G. W. Bush administration was seemingly reluctant to confront the Al-Sabah on domestic reform, at a time when the US was heavily reliant on Kuwait for cooperation in Iraq. For instance the US's emphasis on enhancing the effectiveness of political associations, was itself an implicit acceptance of the official ban on political parties in Kuwait. This tacit approach towards democracy promotion evinces the G. W. Bush administration's underlying emphasis on ongoing stability, and therefore the continuity of the existing political system for the foreseeable future, as the paramount US interest in Kuwait.

¹³¹ See Misenheimer, 'Updated Kuwait Democratic Reform Strategy'. Kelley Jones, the senior NDI representative for Kuwait, briefed US Embassy officials: 'liberal groups expressed concerns about being viewed as too closely affiliated with an American NGO. To address these concerns, the Chairman of Kuwait Graduates Society suggested using his organization as an umbrella for the training programs, the approach preferred by... [the US Embassy.] This way, the Kuwait Graduates Society could be responsible for inviting participants to training seminars, not NDI, thus alleviating the liberal organizations' concerns about being seen as too closely affiliated with NDI.' See Tueller, M., 'Readout of NDI Meetings with Kuwaiti Political Associations', US Embassy in Kuwait, 8/4/2007, at <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/04/07KUWAIT508.html#>, accessed 25/9/2012.

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US Democracy Promotion in Kuwait: An Evaluation of the Strategy

Despite Kuwait's seemingly fertile ground for democratisation, with a relatively consensual system of governance and popular demands for reform already present, the US did not seek to encourage expedited reforms. A number of factors explain the restrained American stance towards democracy promotion in Kuwait. First, stability has remained the paramount US interest in Kuwait since the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Under Clinton, the containment of Iraq and Iran was the main emphasis of US policy in the Middle East. Under G. W. Bush the occupation of Iraq, and to a lesser extent the isolation of Iran, predominated. Kuwait was of relevance in both cases, primarily because of its geographical proximity, and the consequent need to ensure its ongoing stability, which in turn meant the continuity of the existing political system. Second, Kuwait serves as an illustration of the US position that authoritarian rule may well be preferable to democratic governance in certain cases. This was reflected in the US Ambassador to Kuwait, Deborah Jones' assertion that US interests could theoretically be better served by a more 'efficient, directive' government in Kuwait, akin to that of Saudi Arabia.¹³² A third factor is the fact that the US will only support reform when viable candidates, amenable to its interests, are present. The relative strength of Islamists as an opposition force in Kuwait clearly negated this. Alan Misenheimer, the Deputy Chief of Mission in Kuwait, argued that:

in the near term the legalization of parties would be likely to disproportionately benefit Islamists, who are the best organized of Kuwait's political groups. Legalizing parties is a necessity for Kuwait in the long term, but in the short term it is preferable to allow non-Islamist groups time to gain the requisite political organizational skills.¹³³

The consensus was that in the short-term, political reform in Kuwait would likely produce candidates opposed to US interests, as was already the case in the National Assembly, where conservative and Islamist parliamentarians had opposed many of the political, economic, social and cultural reforms supported by the US. Brown claims that: 'As the parliament seemed to become a place where Islamists of various stripes operated freely, it was viewed as a less friendly institution in official

¹³² Jones, 'Kuwait's Democratic Jalopy - Still Chugging Despite Bumps in the Road'.

¹³³ Misenheimer, 'Updated Kuwait Democratic Reform Strategy'.

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American eyes.¹³⁴ This reflects the partisan focus of the US strategy of democracy promotion, with liberal civil society actors supported against alternative, in this case Islamist elements.

The above were compounded by considerations of Kuwait's small size and population, the latter dominated by non-citizens, its location in a tense, geostrategically vital part of the world, and the anyway predominant American military presence in the country. This resulted in a gradualist approach towards the promotion of reform in Kuwait. The maintenance of stability was the key US interest overall, with the nature of the political system secondary at best. Under both the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations emphasis was placed on preventing political regression, such as an unconstitutional suspension of parliament, rather than substantial political reforms leading to a transition to elite-based democracy in the near future. As Ambassador Jones argued: 'For now, absent a "Boris Yeltsin" or other energetic reformer and visionary, this old Chevy [Kuwait's developing democracy] will continue to smoke and clank down the highway. It will be a drawn-out process with no immediate solution, but neither is it likely to be explosive.'¹³⁵ Alnajjar raises an important point in relation to this, when he argues that: 'Democracy in Kuwait is seen by its participants, both government and to some extent the political groupings, as limited to the electoral process. Most of the struggle and debate has been confined to the parliamentary aspect of democracy.'¹³⁶ This predominant focus on the National Assembly as the primary barometer of the state of Kuwaiti politics also applies to external actors. The National Assembly was ultimately seen by the US as the primary manifestation of a less coercive system of governance. While not 'democratic', this relatively consensual variant maintained stability by providing an institutional means of addressing domestic social pressures. At the same time, it left the Kuwaiti government with enough of a monopoly on power to facilitate US interests when necessary. Kuwait can be seen in contrast to Turkey for example, whose parliament prevented the US from using its territory to attack Iraq in 2003, due to domestic popular opposition. Simply put, Kuwait's relatively consensual political system was adequate in the eyes of US policy-makers,

¹³⁴ Brown, 'Kuwaiti Democracy in Crisis'.

¹³⁵ Jones, 'Kuwait's Democratic Jalopy - Still Chugging Despite Bumps in the Road'.

¹³⁶ Alnajjar, 'The Challenges Facing Kuwaiti Democracy', p. 252.

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given the absence of popular instability and more pressing geostrategic interests, and furthermore in contrast to its more authoritarian neighbours such as Saudi Arabia.

Finally regional attitudes towards Kuwait also influenced US reform strategy. Larbi Sadiki argues:

Kuwait, the Arab country most versed in parliamentary politics and electoralism, has never been taken seriously as a democratic model for a number of reasons. It is a 'clan-state'; for the so-called Arab republics clan-politics is looked down upon as retrograde... and belonging to the era of Bey and Khedive-based rule... Another factor is the small size of Kuwait, a country with a demography dominated by expatriates. Current politics in the AME [Arab Middle East] bespeaks the myth that the democratizing model should come from large Arab states.¹³⁷

The latter is evidenced by the emphasis placed on democracy promotion in Egypt by the Clinton and particularly the G. W. Bush administrations, which saw it as a potential exemplar in the region. The stances of important authoritarian US allies in the Gulf, such as Saudi Arabia, was also significant. As Tétreault argues: 'Before the invasion [of 1990], the main foreign interest in Kuwaiti domestic politics had come from Kuwait's immediate neighbours, chiefly Saudi Arabia, who dislike democracy on principle and consistently have urged Kuwaiti rulers to crack down on their opponents.'¹³⁸ This continued to be the case in post-occupation Kuwait. Alnajjar argues that:

The regional political formation has thus always been less than favorable toward democracy and democratizing reforms. The general argument has been that democracy is a Western concept, and that the people of the Gulf are not ready for full participation, and that therefore the best system is the traditional democracy, with face to face consultation, and respect for the ruling house.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Sadiki, L., *Rethinking Arab Democratization: Elections Without Democracy*, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 157.

¹³⁸ Tétreault, *Stories of Democracy*, p. 87.

¹³⁹ Alnajjar, 'The Challenges Facing Kuwaiti Democracy', p. 251.

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He claims that: ‘these regional pressure(s) were and still are an important factor... Any limitation to democracy in Kuwait finds a positive echo in the region.’¹⁴⁰ Of relevance here is that any significant steps towards political, economic, social and cultural reform undertaken by Kuwait, would be seen as heralding a new era for the region, but particularly Saudi Arabia and the other authoritarian Gulf states.

¹⁴⁰ Alnajjar, ‘The Challenges Facing Kuwaiti Democracy’, p. 251.

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Conclusion

In many ways Kuwait is indicative of the broader trends of US democracy promotion – an emphasis on gradual political, economic, social and cultural reforms, driven by civil society, and implemented without significant risk of undermining stability in the near-term. But it also differs in important respects from the examples of Egypt, where both the Clinton and the G. W. Bush administrations played an important role in implementing a wide, albeit graduated range of reforms, and Iraq, where the G. W. Bush administration attempted to mould the first Arab democracy from the ashes of the Ba’ath party. In Kuwait, under both the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations, the US placed a much less prominent emphasis on democracy promotion. And this after the G. H. W. Bush administration insisted on political reforms, mainly the restoration of the National Assembly, as a condition of liberating Kuwait in 1991. As Brown argues:

Kuwaiti democracy owes a strong debt to the strong support of President Bush – ironically, however, it was George H. W. Bush, not his son, who bears responsibility for undergirding Kuwait’s democratic institutions... In 1991, Kuwaiti leaders were made to understand that the U.S. security guarantee depended on their acquiescence to a political system that allowed for popular participation... [But the 2003] U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq depended heavily on Kuwaiti cooperation, and U.S. interest in domestic Kuwaiti political affairs quickly atrophied.¹⁴¹

The Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations’ subordinated emphasis on reform in Kuwait is something of a paradox. Kuwait differed in an important respect to much of the region, one crucial to the pursuit of hegemony, namely ‘the significant residue of popular goodwill... that the United States continues to enjoy in the country, first for rescuing it from Saddam and then for toppling his regime.’¹⁴² Furthermore, again in contrast to most of the region, popular demands for political reform were already widespread in Kuwaiti society. However this relatively fertile ground for the promotion of democracy, and potentially the achievement of hegemony, was largely

¹⁴¹ Brown, N., ‘Moving Out of Kuwait’s Political Impasse’, *Carnegie Web Commentary*, (June) 2009, at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2007/06/25/moving-out-of-kuwait-s-political-impasse/50r>, accessed 24/4/2012.

¹⁴² Pollock, ‘Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy’, p. 23.

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overlooked by both the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations, who were instead consumed with the various regional crises on Kuwait's borders.

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‘So the fundamental question is, do we have the confidence and universal values to help change a troubled part of the world... I believe democracy – the desire to be free is universal. That’s what I believe. And if you believe that, then you’ve got to act on it. That doesn’t mean militarily. But that means using the influence of the United States to work with others to help – to help freedom spread.’¹

– *President George W. Bush*

This study has been driven by a twofold aim. First, to examine the US strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East under the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations. Second, to consider whether this strategy has constituted a pursuit of hegemony in the Gramscian sense. Over the course of the previous chapters, the study has critically deconstructed the strategy of democracy promotion on two fundamental levels. First on a theoretical level, in terms of the US’s conceptualisation of democracy and its constitutive role in the worldview promoted. And second on an empirical level, in terms of the US’s implementation of the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East, and particularly Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait. This investigation of the *philosophy* and *praxis* of US democracy promotion has been pursued by utilising an analytical framework derived from the Gramscian approach. It builds on an established body of scholarship, which has applied Gramscian theory to democracy promotion in countries as diverse as the Philippines, Chile and Poland. This has offered the opportunity to critically interrogate the ideology associated with democracy promotion, in contrast to the majority of the literature, which has predominantly accepted the strategy as axiomatically positive, viewing any process of democratisation in the Middle East as part of a progressive, universal trend.² It has also offered the opportunity to consider US strategy in the region in a new light, moving beyond traditional IR analyses, which have rendered the study of the Middle East largely exempt from theoretical innovation. The primary reason for this is the prevalence of realist paradigms in explaining the international relations of the Middle East, with a majority of the literature focusing on material

¹ Bush, G. W., ‘Remarks by President Bush on the War on Terror’, 12/12/2005, at <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/remarks-by-president-bush-on-the-war-on-terror-55495697.html>, accessed 18/6/2012.

² Hutchings, K., ‘Modelling Democracy’, in Smith, H., (ed.), *Democracy and International Relations: Critical Theories/ Problematic Practices*, MacMillan Press, 2000, p. 39. See for instance Sen, A., ‘Democracy as a Universal Value’, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, Issue 3, 1999.

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and security explanations. While these are indeed important determinants of US regional policy, they are not exclusive, and have tended to obscure other variables and trends, not least the spread of America's political ideology in the Middle East. This has been exacerbated by the fact that the processes of democratisation in the Middle East, and by association the various policies that comprise democracy promotion, are still at a relatively early juncture. Hence the majority of the literature has relegated the study of political reform to a secondary status, focusing instead on the prevalence of authoritarianism.³ This has been driven in part by a latent perception of the Middle East as 'exceptional', which has been true as much of the US policy-making community as of the academy. Elie Kedourie's aforementioned claim that 'the idea of democracy is quite alien to the mind-set of Islam' is one example.⁴ This study represents the first time a Gramscian theoretical framework has been adapted and applied to comprehensively analyse US democracy promotion in the Middle East. It offers a novel way of considering US strategy in Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait, but also across the region as a whole, countering over-simplistic analyses and proposing a re-evaluation of what US foreign policy in the Middle East truly constitutes. By critiquing the ideological foundations of the strategy of democracy promotion, as well as its implementation in the said countries, the study offers an original contribution to the existing literature, enhancing understanding of this ever more important subject.

The promotion of democracy in the Middle East represents an important strategy of contemporary US foreign policy. Like other great powers before it, the US has sought to propagate its political system and ideology, comprised in this case of liberal democratic political values and free market economic principles, far beyond its borders. In the Middle East though, democracy promotion emerged to the fore of US policy later than in other parts of the world. Since the US assumed primacy in the region in the mid-twentieth century, its interests have been ensured predominantly through authoritarian proxies. While this was also true of US policy elsewhere, for example Latin America, it remained the standard of engagement far longer in the

³ See for example Bellin, E., 'The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 2, (January) 2004; Heydemann, S., 'Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World', Brookings Institution, No. 13, (October) 2007.

⁴ Kedourie, E., *Democracy and Arab Political Culture*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992, p. 1.

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Middle East. This began to change in main under the Clinton administration, which sought to encourage incremental economic and civil society reforms in the region, in the belief that these would serve as a prelude for political reform and a new era of regional stability. Under the G. W. Bush administration, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the promotion of democracy emerged as an exigent aim of US policy in the Middle East, this primarily because of the Administration's perception of the region's 'democratic deficit' as the underlying cause of the attacks. Therefore, in contrast to popular belief, the strategy of democracy promotion was not introduced in the Middle East by the G. W. Bush administration. Despite its more explicit rhetorical stance, it rather built on and augmented existing initiatives established by the Clinton administration. Both administrations were continuing in an established tradition of US foreign policy, which has aspired to export a synthesis of democracy and capitalism as the necessary ingredients for the 'good life' in each and every country. This has been evidenced across the world, in an array of countries from the Philippines to Panama to Poland. Where G. W. Bush and to a lesser extent Clinton did diverge from previous administrations was in their application of the strategy of democracy promotion to the Middle East.

At its essence the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East relates to the paramount importance attached to the region by the US. This is manifested in a complex, multifaceted and wide-ranging involvement, which derives from its primary regional interests: the security of energy supplies and its relationship with Israel. The objectives of democracy promotion have been twofold. First, the aim has been to ensure the stability of state and society in the countries concerned, as well as the broader region, by gradually encouraging the emergence of elite-based democracies to replace existing authoritarian arrangements, and institute a more enduring form of stability. Second, the aim has been the achievement of hegemony in the Gramscian sense, whereby the promoted liberal democratic ideology is accepted by Middle Eastern societies as the natural order. While authoritarian governments were long seen as guarantors of 'stability' in the region, the policy of democracy promotion has emerged as a result of the US's need to shape political transitions as they inevitably occur across this last major bastion of authoritarian rule. The fact remains that authoritarian governments, reliant on coercion, are more likely to face popular challenges to their rule and therefore instability, than governments that

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utilise more consensual means, such as elite-based democracies.⁵ The Philippines under Marcos, Chile under Pinochet, and Panama under Noriega are all examples, with the US eventually ceasing support and facilitating transitions to ‘democracy’. This generally results in more subtle, nuanced forms of social control, with the underlying aim consistently remaining the maintenance of stability. The strategy of democracy promotion is therefore not about the US exercising direct control in these countries, but rather attempting to manage political outcomes so as to maintain its influence and interests. In the Middle East as elsewhere, the US has sought to achieve this by cultivating the necessary actors, located mainly within civil society, to gradually facilitate an eventual transfer of support away from authoritarian political systems to elite-based democracies. The present study has constituted an attempt to trace the contours of this ongoing transition in US policy in the Middle East, a gradual strategic shift in emphasis from coercive to consensual forms of governance.

The Middle East, under the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations, has served as a unique study of contemporary US democracy promotion. From Egypt in North Africa, to Iraq in the centre of the Middle East, and Kuwait at the shores of the Persian Gulf, the selected case studies have illustrated the myriad complexities and challenges of the strategy of democracy promotion. Their different governments, economies, geographical locations, social structures and cultures, and the different relationships and interests the US has with each of them, all form a rich tapestry for analysis. In Egypt, Clinton’s emphasis on economic reform and the strengthening of civil society established the basis for G. W. Bush’s more direct demands for political reform. This was a gradual process, which sought to foster the growth of relevant political and economic norms, as well as a strong civil society to ground them in, with the aim of facilitating change over the long-term, rather than destabilizing a key ally in the Mubarak government in the short-term. As US Ambassador to Egypt, Francis Ricciardone, argued: ‘A steady, incremental approach will continue to stretch Egypt toward a democratic future.’⁶ Yet when it became clear that the

⁵ This was demonstrated in the Middle East during the ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011. In Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, authoritarian governments were overthrown as a result of popular discontent. This is discussed further below.

⁶ Ricciardone, F., ‘Next Steps for Advancing Democracy in Egypt’, US Embassy in Egypt, 6/3/2006, at <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9135>, accessed 24/8/2012.

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Islamist Muslim Brotherhood would be the primary beneficiary of political reform in Egypt, the G. W. Bush administration noticeably toned down its demands. The strategy of democracy promotion in Egypt can therefore be seen as a long-term pursuit of political reform and eventually hegemony. In Iraq, after the violent overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the G. W. Bush administration sought to unleash the beginnings of a ‘democratic tsunami’ on the wider region.⁷ But the attempt to directly transplant its own political and economic institutions to Iraq, rather than fostering the growth of underlying norms and values, was largely rejected by Iraqi society, and was further undermined by the emergence of a widespread anti-American insurgency. The spiralling levels of violence crippled the implementation of the strategy of democracy promotion, and ultimately forced the US to prematurely transfer sovereignty back to Iraq. This ended any hopes that Iraq would serve as a potential democratic lodestar for the region, at least in the foreseeable future, but also the pursuit of hegemony in the country in any real sense. In Kuwait, G. H. W. Bush’s liberation of the country from Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in 1991 was partly contingent on promises of political reform. This can be seen in contrast to the relative lack of emphasis on reform under the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations, a reflection of the primacy of American concerns with Hussein. But the US did implement democracy promotion programs in Kuwait under both these administrations, albeit on a low-level and without seeking to subvert the ruling Al-Sabah family. Kuwait can be seen in contrast to the rest of the region, given that demands for political reform were already widespread amongst the broader Kuwaiti population. Furthermore it incorporated some existing democratic features, primarily in the form of the National Assembly. Yet the presence of an already relatively consensual model of governance, alongside overriding concerns with Iraq and regional stability, meant that both the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations continued to support the Kuwaiti monarchy and a restricted political system, rather than pursuing in-depth reform and hegemony.

The case studies demonstrate the different relationships and interests held by the US with each of them, and by association the differing degrees of emphasis on democracy promotion within them. But they also reveal certain shared characteristics

⁷ Ottaway, M., Carothers, T., Hawthorne, A., Brumberg, D., ‘Democratic Mirage in the Middle East’, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (October) 2002.

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in the US's approach to democracy promotion in the region, which are broadly true of the strategy in other parts of the world. First, they illustrate the US's position that authoritarian governance may well be preferable in certain cases. In the context of the Middle East, the continuity of authoritarian regimes with relatively few challenges to their rule, has meant ongoing US support. Stability remains the paramount US interest in all of the above countries, as well as the wider region. This was demonstrated in the aftermath of September 11, when US alliances with various authoritarian states such as Libya were in fact augmented under the 'war on terror'. This evidences the security concerns that underlie US democracy promotion. It reflects a fundamental dilemma at the heart of US policy in the Middle East, which is torn between its existing relationships with authoritarian proxies, which have by and large ensured stability through coercive means, and the desire to encourage political reform in the region, in the hope of introducing a more enduring form of stability based on consensual rule. This tension severely impedes the prospects of the US successfully propagating its political ideology in the region, and moreover of achieving hegemony, not least because it alienates the very societies it seeks to co-opt. Second, the case studies demonstrate that the US will only promote political reform vigorously when conditions are deemed viable. Viability is in turn determined primarily by the presence of candidates amenable to the US, and their ability to obtain legitimation through elections. In the Middle East this constitutes predominantly 'liberal' or 'moderate' actors, who as of yet have been unable to mobilise the necessary popular support. As a result US efforts have concentrated on augmenting the strength of this constituency, a minority across Middle Eastern civil societies, but one that nonetheless broadly supports the promoted ideology, and is therefore more likely to be accommodating to US interests. However it is worth noting that, in other instances such as the Philippines or Chile, at times of mass unrest and instability, the US has sought to rapidly and unilaterally encourage transitions away from authoritarian governance. Given such dire circumstances, even in the absence of satisfactory political actors, the assumption is that this could also be the case in the Middle East.

Third, the case studies reflect the fact that democracy promotion in the Middle East is very much an ongoing US strategy, still in its early stages. As elsewhere it has been based on the principle that capitalism is integral to the emergence of

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democracy, evinced by the fact that both the Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations implemented Trade and Investment Framework Agreements (TIFAs) with each of the case studies, in an attempt to foster the underlying economic conditions for political reform.⁸ Overall US democracy promotion in the Middle East has been characterised by an emphasis on incremental political, economic, social and cultural reforms, with the maintenance of stability paramount. As a result it is important to note that the US has not sought to destabilise existing authoritarian allies by withdrawing support, so as to encourage transitions to more consensual forms of governance, as was the case with Pinochet in Chile for example. This is primarily because until recently, authoritarian governments in the region had not faced popular challenges to their rule, and had therefore remained relatively stable. Democracy promotion in the Middle East is seen by the US as a long-term strategy, which corresponds with the gradual processes of internalisation the achievement of a Gramscian hegemony requires. Finally, the case studies evidence the inherently partisan focus of the strategy of democracy promotion, with civil society elements conforming to the ideology promoted by the US supported against alternatives. This was reflected in the US Embassy in Kuwait's leaked 'Democracy Promotion Strategy', which repeatedly stressed the need to support 'liberal' and 'moderate' elements, against those that were 'Islamist' or 'tribally-based'.⁹ In Egypt, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice asserted explicitly that: 'we have not engaged the Muslim Brotherhood and we don't – we won't.'¹⁰ This ideological bias was the primary reason for the G. W. Bush administration's diminishing emphasis on democracy promotion in the Middle East after 2005. Joshua Muravchik argues that:

What sapped the vitality of the "Arab spring" was the triumph of Islamists – the Muslim Brotherhood's strong showing in Egypt's 2005 parliamentary election, Hamas's victory in Gaza, and Hezbollah's ascendance in Lebanon. In response to these election results, the G. W. Bush administration muffled its advocacy of

⁸ A TIFA is commonly seen as a precursor to a Free Trade Agreement, a central feature of free market economic systems. The Clinton administration established a TIFA with Egypt in 1999, while the G. W. Bush administration did so with Kuwait in 2004 and Iraq in 2005.

⁹ Misenheimer, A., 'Updated Kuwait Democratic Reform Strategy', US Embassy in Kuwait, 11/10/2007, at <http://wikileaks.ch/cable/2007/10/07KUWAIT1509.html>, accessed 4/4/2012.

¹⁰ Rice, C., 'US State Department Question and Answer at the American University in Cairo', 20/5/2005, at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0506/S00328/rice-qa-at-the-american-university-in-cairo.htm>, accessed 24/8/2012.

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democracy in the Middle East. Some democrats in the region even took a go-slow stance. To put it bluntly, these outcomes renewed questions about whether the Arabs were ready for democracy.¹¹

Muravchik's argument indicates the prejudices commonly held against Islamists by the US, and moreover the inherent assumption that such groups participate in the electoral process simply to exploit it.¹² With a history of opposing American and Western influence in the region, Islamists are not seen by the US as acceptable political candidates, which exposes the hollow rhetoric of 'inclusivity' and 'universality' associated with US democracy promotion. This has deeper implications when one considers the ideological role performed by Islamism in the Middle East, in terms of offering an alternative or counter-hegemonic worldview to that promoted by the US. It is possible to argue that, much in the same way that 'democracy' has provided the ideological foundations for the US's opposition to imperialism, fascism and communism, it has also done so against its latest adversary, in the form of political Islam.¹³

The US strategy of democracy promotion has faced a number of challenges in the Middle East. The most important, and perhaps obvious, is that democracy promotion can be superseded by more pressing interests. William Rugh, a former US Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, stated: 'Each relationship that the United States has with each country has to be looked at in its own context; we have different priorities in different countries. When internal political issues rise too high on the priority list, we distort our interests and mislead people.'¹⁴ One such interest on the regional level was the Arab-Israeli conflict. Under the Clinton administration in particular, negotiations on its resolution were a priority. With Egypt playing an integral facilitatory role in the regional peace process, the Administration did not want to pressure it too forcefully on domestic political reform. Ultimately the

¹¹ Muravchik, J., 'Islamists Lose Ground in the Middle East', *Wall Street Journal*, 2/6/2009, at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124381143508370179.html>, accessed 26/7/2012.

¹² See Gerges, F., *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests*, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

¹³ Cox, M., Ikenberry, J., Inoguchi, T., (eds.), *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 10.

¹⁴ Rugh, W., in Deutsch, R., Cordesman, A., Magro, H., Rugh, W., 'Symposium - The Challenge in the Gulf: Building a Bridge from Containment to Stability', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (May) 1997, p. 20.

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Administration believed it was ‘easier to cut deals with autocratic rulers than with unpredictable parliaments and electorates.’¹⁵ Democracy promotion is only one strand of US policy in the region, which has to take into account multiple, often divergent interests. As such one of the main challenges for the US is to resolve the tensions between its immediate security imperatives and its long-term interest in regional political reform.¹⁶

A second, central challenge for US democracy promotion in the Middle East has been to maintain the stability of the state, and by association that of the government, while at the same time encouraging the emergence of countervailing forces in civil society. This challenge has been manifested in a somewhat etatist focus, reflected for example in the G. W. Bush administration’s MEPI and BMENA initiatives, which were reliant on the state and its agencies to function as the primary vehicles for reform. To a significant extent, US strategy has been based on the assumption that Middle Eastern states are ultimately willing to institute political and economic reforms, and simply require procedural guidance and practical assistance to undergo this inevitable process. This was reflected in the US Embassy in Egypt’s confidential democracy strategy, which claimed that:

President Mubarak is deeply skeptical of the U.S. role in democracy promotion. Nonetheless... [US Government] programs are helping to establish democratic institutions and strengthen individual voices for change in Egypt. This change is often incremental and painstaking, but will also have enduring impact. We will sustain successful programs and create additional on-shore initiatives to optimize American influence through the looming leadership succession.¹⁷

¹⁵ Dunne, M., ‘Integrating Democracy Promotion into U.S. Middle East Policy’, *Carnegie Papers*, No. 50, (October) 2004, p. 4.

¹⁶ Cofman Wittes, T., ‘United States: Progress of the “Freedom Strategy” in the Middle East’, *Arab Reform Bulletin*, Vol. 4, Issue 1, (February) 2006.

¹⁷ Jones, S., ‘Egypt: Updated Democracy Strategy’, US Embassy in Egypt, 9/10/2007, at <http://www.aftenposten.no/spesial/wikileaksdokumenter/article4008796.ece#.T0ALVIGzfap>, accessed 24/8/2012.

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This ignores the fact that authoritarian governments in the region have no interest in undermining their own carefully constructed positions of authority.¹⁸ It can be seen in contrast to Larry Diamond, Juan Linz and Seymour Lipset's comparative study of democratisation in developing states, which identified one fundamental, common element: 'the crucial importance of effective and democratically committed leadership.'¹⁹ This is a variable clearly absent in the vast majority of Middle Eastern states. The strategy of US democracy promotion is largely dependent on the acquiescence and cooperation of the governments concerned, with the ambiguity of this dependency illustrated by their aforementioned pre-emption of the proposed 'Greater Middle East Initiative'.²⁰ This reliance on the state as one of the main agents of reform, amidst the relatively underdeveloped presence of civil society in the region, constitutes a significant challenge for the strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East.

With reference to the achievement of a Gramscian hegemony, it is clear that the US strategy of democracy promotion did not achieve this in Egypt, Iraq or Kuwait. The achievement of hegemony is an organic process, whereby coercion is replaced by consensualism, the promoted ideology internalised voluntarily by societies themselves as the natural order. By the end of the G. W. Bush administration's term in January 2009, this did not apply in the case studies or the broader region. But through an emphasis on strengthening civil society, and imparting American political, economic, social and cultural values on a societal level, both the Clinton and the G. W. Bush administrations did seek to encourage the acceptance of the promoted ideology by Egyptian, Iraqi and Kuwaiti societies. When one considers that both democratisation and the achievement of hegemony are long-term, multi-layered processes, then contemporary developments in the Middle East indicate that to some extent their efforts may have been significant, although how much exactly remains to be seen.²¹ Since late 2010, under the banner of the somewhat cliché 'Arab

¹⁸ Ottaway, M., Carothers, T., 'Greater Middle East Initiative: Off to a False Start', *Carnegie Policy Brief*, No. 29, (March) 2004, p. 3.

¹⁹ Diamond, L., Linz, J., Lipset, S., (eds.), *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia*, Vol. 3, Adamantine Press, 1989, p. xx.

²⁰ 'G-8 Greater Middle East Partnership', 13/2/2004, at <http://www.albab.com/arab/docs/international/gmep2004.htm>, accessed 26/7/2012. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

²¹ It is also worth noting that one of the most underappreciated aspects of Gramsci's theory of hegemony is that he perceived it as fluctuating; from strong hegemony, which incorporates a high level of social integration and direct consensus between elites and the masses, through to weak

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Spring,' various countries in the Middle East have witnessed the emergence of popular movements that have demanded, at least broadly, some of the very norms and values promoted by the US. Beginning with Zine Al-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, successive authoritarian governments have fallen across the region in the face of popular protests. Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, the US's main Arab ally in the region, was perhaps the most unexpected. Muammar Gaddafi in Libya and Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen followed.²² In the meantime Bahrain and Syria have witnessed civil uprisings, the former repressing it violently, while the latter has degenerated into civil war. Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco and Sudan have all seen protests. Smaller ones have also taken place in Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman and Saudi Arabia. Clearly the Middle East is undergoing significant political changes. As Prince Hassan bin Al-Talal of Jordan stated: 'The outcome of this tectonic realignment is not just unpredictable, but unknowable.'²³

There is a saying in Arabic: 'Books are written in Egypt, printed in Lebanon and read in Iraq.' It alludes to the transnational impact of ideas, events and crises in the Middle East, which can often spread rapidly through the region. This applies also to the contemporary popular movements agitating for political reform. Here the role of the 'domino effect' is relevant, an explicit aim of the G. W. Bush administration when it sought to democratise Iraq. Walid Jumblatt, a prominent leader of Lebanon's Druze community, stated in 2005: 'It's strange for me to say it, but this process of change has started because of the American invasion of Iraq... I was cynical about Iraq. But when I saw the Iraqi people voting three weeks ago, 8 million of them, it was the start of a new Arab world.'²⁴ He claimed that: 'The Syrian people, the Egyptian people, all say that something is changing. The Berlin Wall has fallen. We can see it.'²⁵ The causal factors behind the 'Arab Spring' are numerous, multifaceted and complex. Clearly it would be naïve to deny the impact of domestic factors in the

hegemony, which is characterised by a high level of elite integration, but with little incorporation of the masses. See Femia, J., *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process*, Clarendon Press, 1981, p. 47.

²² While Saleh stepped down in February 2012, his regime has largely remained in place.

²³ Al-Talal, H., cited in Black, I., 'Where the Arab Spring Will End is Anyone's Guess', *Guardian*, 17/6/2011, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/17/arab-spring-end-anyone-guess>, accessed 28/7/2012.

²⁴ Jumblatt, W., cited in Ignatius, D., 'Beirut's Berlin Wall', *Washington Post*, 23/2/2005, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A45575-2005Feb22.html>, accessed 26/7/2012.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

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‘Arab Spring’, whether political, economic, social or otherwise. As Nicola Pratt argues: ‘The implicit assumption is that the West understands the Arab Spring in terms of ‘Western’ norms and values. Prevalent orientalist attitudes amongst commentators and policy makers and even some scholars, cannot accommodate explanations that the Arab spring is actually the result of domestic structural change.’²⁶ But it would be equally naïve to deny the impact of external factors, including the role of US democracy promotion. As the case studies demonstrate, the US has deployed this strategy in each of them with varying degrees of emphasis and success, as it has done so previously in numerous other parts of the world. At the very least, as Shadi Hamid argues with reference to the G. W. Bush administration: ‘Whatever its faults, and whatever its intent... [it] helped inject democracy and democracy promotion into Arab public discourse.’²⁷ A small example of the role played by the US in the dynamics of Mubarak’s overthrow in Egypt follows. In 2005 the G. W. Bush administration provided funding for the training of electoral monitors, who have a long tradition in Egyptian politics, and supported their accreditation by the Egyptian government. As a result of this, in late 2010 around 13,000 monitors witnessed one the most fraudulent parliamentary elections ever held in Egypt.²⁸ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, whose Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies trained some of these observers, claimed that: ‘The very fact that they saw the fraud firsthand has contributed to them turning from monitors into activists... They became very disillusioned with the regime.’²⁹ Clearly the US did not organise or fund the protests, these were driven primarily by simmering popular discontent. But as Stephen McInerney, executive director of the Project on Middle East Democracy, stated: ‘We didn’t fund them to start protests, but we did help support their development of skills and networking.’³⁰

²⁶ Pratt, N., ‘Understanding the Arab Spring’, 24/11/2011, at http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/people/pratt/research/arabspring/understanding_the_arab_spring.pdf, accessed 28/7/2012.

²⁷ Hamid, S., ‘Reviving Bush’s Best Unfulfilled Idea: Democracy Promotion’, *The Atlantic*, 13/9/2011, at <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/09/reviving-bushs-best-unfulfilled-idea-democracy-promotion/244935/>, accessed 26/7/2012.

²⁸ Tisdall, S., ‘Hosni Mubarak: Egyptian ‘Pharaoh’ Dethroned Amid Gunfire and Blood’, *Guardian*, 11/2/2011, at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/11/hosni-mubarak-resigns-analysis>, accessed 28/7/2012.

²⁹ Ibrahim, S., cited in Stockman, F., ‘Bush Program Helped Lay the Groundwork in Egypt’, *Boston Globe*, 13/2/2011, at http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2011/02/13/bush_program_helped_lay_the_groundwork_in_egypt/, accessed 28/7/2012.

³⁰ McInerney, S., cited in *Ibid.*

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This study of US democracy promotion in Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait provides important lessons for each of these countries, as well as the broader Middle East region. While the study has made a number of important contributions, it also raises a variety of questions which require further research. At a time of regional turmoil, political reform and by association democracy promotion have never been more relevant as topics of study in the Middle East. Much like Latin America before it, we are witnessing the emergence of popular movements that are challenging authoritarian governments long supported by the US.³¹ While it is clear that it is far too soon to assess the outcomes of US democracy promotion in Egypt, Iraq and Kuwait, let alone the other states affected by the events of the ‘Arab Spring’, this study provides a solid basis for further research into US policy in the Middle East, and in particular the strategy of democracy promotion, at this time of momentous transition across the region. Some of the topics that need to be addressed include: the exact role of the US in the ‘Arab Spring’, the possibility of a fourth ‘wave’ of democracy occurring in the Middle East, the role of domestic versus external causal factors in these political transitions, the impact of globalization and the transmission of democratic norms and values in the region, and the role of Islamism in the Arab Spring and future processes of regional democratisation. These are some of the important issues that require further consideration, given their impact on the states, societies and individuals of the region, but also beyond. Whether these movements, processes and dynamics are driven by demands for political, economic or social rights, by internal or external motivations, this study offers a framework to consider the role of the US in these historic processes.

³¹ Some have since attempted to credit the G. W. Bush administration with providing the catalyst for these processes. See for instance Abrams, E., ‘Egypt Protests Show George W. Bush was Right About Freedom in the Arab World’, *Washington Post*, 29/1/2011, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/28/AR2011012803144.html>, accessed 26/7/2012.

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